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Dungeon®

September/October 2000
Issue #82

Thanks to words, we have been able to rise above the brutes; and thanks to words, we have often sunk to the level of the demons.

—Aldous Huxley
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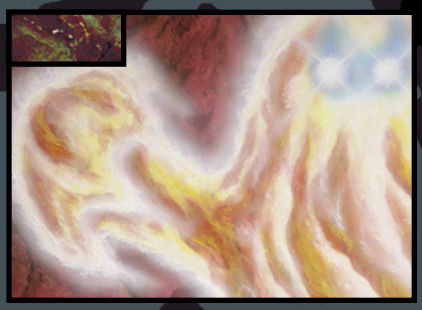

Cover

Carl Critchlow captures Thurra, the vengeful half-demon unleashed by unwary heroes in "Eye for an Eye."

Adventures Incorporated

Give Your D&D® Campaign an Edge

by Christopher Perkins

When I joined Wizards of the Coast three years ago, the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game was in the earliest stages of development. I knew that Monte Cook was planning to start a campaign using the new rules, so I jumped in (first as a human paladic named Lauric, who died fighting his evil twin, then as a lizard man fighter named Ves, who left to rebuild his homeland, and finally as a dwarf fighter named Aurum, who lived to a ripe old age). Monte's campaign was called Praemal, a world as young as the D&D rules we were playtesting at the time. While the campaign contained familiar elements—wizards, dragons, and heroes of destiny—there were many unique twists and novelties: children born with strange runes on their faces, floating mountains, a golden forest in a parallel dimension, and invisible moons that imbue the world with magic. Monte not only allowed us to mess with new rules but also allowed us to explore a D&D world unlike any other.

Today, the world is ten thousand years older, and we're all playing different characters in a different time. Stepping back, I'm amazed by how much the world has evolved over the past three years—not unlike the D&D game itself.

A lifelong DM, I wanted to start my own campaign. Inspired by Monte's world and a second draft of the *Player's Handbook*, I created the Arveniar campaign. I sought to build a world that captured all the amazing things about D&D but was unlike anything I'd seen before: a world where symbiotic plants live in tandem with other forms of life, where the main form of travel is through the air astride winged mounts or aboard gigantic soar whales, where even ridiculous flumphs serve a purpose, where peril and politics go hand-in-hand and the wonders of the natural world seed adventures untold. The players started the campaign in the capital city of Retheq, a Byzantine den of treachery perched atop a 1,000-foot-tall natural pillar of rock overlooking a vast canyon. When they tired of Retheqan politics, they fled aboard a gnomish zepellin and were quickly immersed in new adventures abroad.

The D&D rules have enabled me to create some fascinating opponents over the past two years, including a particularly troublesome drow medusa/druid who managed to turn Sean Reynolds' dwarven fighter to stone not once, but twice. (The second time, she summoned an earth elemental to smash the petrified dwarf to bits. When you see Sean at a convention or speak with him online, ask him about Droo and his prosthetic arm) The party has visited the great mushroom city of Jhure, participated in the Dance of the Windsongs (a bard's race with gliders powered by song), and faced hordes of orcish barbarians in scorpionlike helicopters (mechanical vessels inspired by the SPELLJAMMER® campaign). As the campaign heads toward its inevitable conclusion, the characters find themselves heading back to where everything began—the city of Retheq—to save the empire and set things aright.

The new D&D game is all about starting new campaigns and building new worlds for your players' enjoyment. We hope that the adventures in this issue will inspire you, and let us know how your new campaign plays out!

Dungeon®

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Letters
Voice of the Readers

Tell us what you think of the adventures in this issue. Write to "Letters," DUNGEON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055 or email us at ***dungeon@wizards.com.***

Bravo!

I continue to be impressed with the improvement in *DUNGEON Magazine*. The covers have been striking, possibly the best yet. The interior illustrations and maps are also great. Isometric maps like the ones in "The Winter Tapestry" (Issue #78) are essential for heavily tunneled areas. The combination of top and side views used in the map of "Bad Seeds" (Issue #79) was helpful in deciphering the twists and turns of the Enclave lair. If the DM doesn't have a clear understanding of how these dungeons are laid out, he or she will never be able to explain them to the party's mapper. Thanks to Diesel for lighting the way.

I liked the epic adventure "Lear the Giant-King" (Issue #78). I doubt that I will be able to convey the enormous scale and historical implications of this adventure to my players.

Mid-level adventures like "Trial of the Frog" (Issue #78) and "Cloudkill" (Issue #79) are always welcome. Most parties spend a lot of time in that mid-level range. One can never have too many interesting adventures in this category. The setting of "Cloudkill" was marvelously peculiar, and the module could play to either the party's strategist or sword-arm.

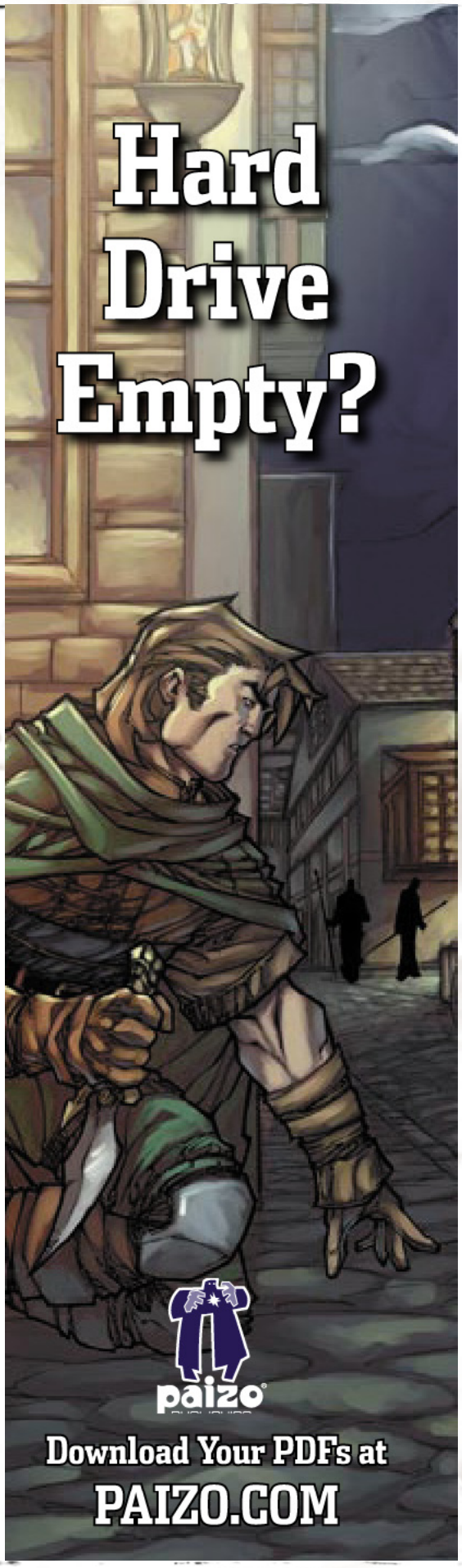
The combination of underwater and dungeon environments works well (better than I ever anticipated) in both "Peer Amid the Waters" (Issue #78) and "The Akriloth" (Issue #79). The afore-mentioned module is a great classic-with-a-twist rescue mission that adapts easily to any campaign and level. The latter is a treasure hunt with enough hack and slash to satisfy Fafhrd on meth. Bravo! These adventures are perfect examples of what I am looking for in your resource. One could expand and fortify the tomb in "Peer Amid the Waters" to challenge any party. Likewise, additional factions could occupy all of those empty rooms in "The Akriloth" and make the Temple of Eadro a 150-room survival contest. I am eager to use "The Akriloth," and I hope I can do it justice. With a rich combination of adversaries and a dreadfully cunning and lethal final foe, this dungeon is the kind that becomes legend among players.

A. J. Sample
Des Moines, IA

Khazefryn

I'd like to congratulate Felix Douglas for "Khazefryn" (Issue #81). Normally I want a *DUNGEON Magazine* adventure to have a definite plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Now here comes "Khazefryn," which has none of these things. Instead what we get is a delightful "add-on" for any Underdark campaign setting. The location appeals to me on many levels. First, the layout is magnificent. I find myself visualizing the grandeur of this water-filled cavern with the islands jutting out of it. The floating walk-ways between the islands were a nice touch. I also like the power structure in the cavern and the struggles between the various creatures that live there. The bit about the lizards swallowing the blindheims because they are underfed, and having the blindheims literally beaten out of them made me laugh out loud. In fact, it made a welcome change from the usually dry reading of an AD&D® adventure. What I like most of all about this adventure is that there are several different things the PCs can do in Khazefryn, and there are many reasons that the party might want to return there after passing through once. This is not an adventure written for a single use; it was designed to be revisited and works easily into a DM's campaign world.

I also have to say that Issue #81 is



my favorite issue since Issue #77. It has given me fuel for my own campaign. One thing worth trying is to link James Wyatt's "The Door To Darkness" (in Issue #81) to "Khazefryn" by manipulating events so that PCs who go through the portal end up in Khazefryn instead of the city of Fey-Aryth.

Again, good work all around on this issue. I look forward to seeing the changes 3rd Edition brings to *Dungeon Magazine*.

Darrin Drader
via email

Exploring the Underhalls

While I was reading through the campaign guide to Undermountain, it hit me: This dungeon is supposed to be the biggest and deepest dungeon of them all. There are a lot of cool things you can do with a dungeon of this size. As a DM, the problem is filling in the blanks. There are vast blank areas on the maps of Halaster's Halls, and even Halaster himself might not have enough inspiration to design all the traps and features one might encounter in this place of death and darkness. So why not call in the help of your readers?

FILLING A HOLE WITH MONSTERS IS EASY. THE TOUGH PART IS MAKING THE PCS CRAWL DOWN THE HOLE.

Every month, you could take an area of the Underhalls and ask your readers to design a cool and original description of the rooms and halls. The best one(s) would be published. In this way Halaster's home will grow in detail. I think readers will like it since it is no easy task to design a dungeon of this size. Sure, you can put in a lot of monsters, traps, and treasures, but it can be hard to always have new and innovating ideas. And, of course, it is time consuming. "Underhalls" could be a new recurring feature like Side Treks, taking no more than two or three pages each issue. The designs can be adapted for dungeons other than Undermountain, of course, and the feature would fit well in the magazine, which is called Dungeon after all.

I hope you'll consider this idea and that the labyrinth under Waterdeep might become even more mysterious, dangerous, tricky, and entertaining.

Tommy Smekens
via email

More Maps of Mystery!

Each time I get one of your magazines through the mail, I'm impressed by the consistent plotlines, stories, and artwork that I find within its pages. I especially like the Maps of Mystery feature, which is (in my humble opinion) your brightest idea since Side Treks. Please don't give up either of these features.

Andrew Alton
via email

We plan to present more Maps of Mystery and Side Treks, both in the magazine and on our website (www.wizards.com). Our stack of Side Treks is getting low, so if you have some short adventure ideas, send them in—but make sure you read our new submission guidelines first! An electronic version of our guidelines appears on our website: **http://www.wizards.com/dungeon/welcome.asp**

Treasure Trove of Adventures

I just had to drop a line and tell you what I thought about Issue #81. To sum it up in a word: perfect.

First, all the adventures can be dropped into nearly any campaign. I have my own world—an amalgamation of borrowed supplements from a range of campaign settings plus a lot of stuff I have created on my own. Being able to drop *Dungeon Magazine* into my game is the only thing that keeps my group going these days, though. I literally could not run my campaign without the magazine. I find the adventures easy to adapt and string together. For example, I have used "The Winter Tapestry" (Issue #78) to launch my most recent plot, which has my players trying to find the start point to the "map" while trying to dodge a notorious smuggler, art dealer, and all around baddie (who knows the map leads to a dragon's treasure), while competing with a rival group. The starting point on the map is no longer the city of Molvencold, but rather is located on the far end of "Mertylmane's Road" (Issue #76).

Reading through Issue #81, I can see an immediate use for "A Race Against Time" (though intended for a lower level party, I think it can be a serious challenge to a higher level group with little effort), "The Door to Darkness" (which has already been modified to suit my mid-level group—a stroke of genius, Mr. Wyatt!) and "Khazyfryn" (which I will run "on the way home" from the conclusion to "The Winter Tapestry." My players might be tough enough to handle it by then.

This leads me to my second reason I loved this issue more than most. While the adventures were clearly developed with a certain level of PCs in mind, as I read them, I could see how easily I could challenge my players with them, because none of them really depended on combat power to solve. There were mysteries to be investigated. Making the bad guys tougher is easy. Filling a hole with monsters is easy. The tough part is making the PCs want to crawl down the hole.

Keep up the good work, especially if it means more issues like #81! Oh, and GREAT cover. Loved it.

Jason Bartlett
Harrogate, England

continued on page 92

Evil Unearthed

Digging in the Dark

by Ed Stark

artwork by Toren Atkinson, cartography by Diesel

"Evil Unearthed" is a D&D adventure designed for four 1st-level player characters. Characters who survive the entire adventure should amass enough experience points (XPs) to advance to 2nd level. If the party contains more than four characters, individual PCs will earn fewer XPs and thus might not obtain sufficient experience to advance in level.

Although set the GREYHAWK campaign setting, the adventure can be transported easily into the DM's own campaign. The adventure can also be modified for characters of higher or lower level. See the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar for help on modifying the adventure for different party levels.

Adventure Summary

This adventure revolves around a conspiracy between two men, one of whom wishes to bring back a great evil to his tiny corner of the world. His name is Kor Bloodaxe, a human priest of Hextor (god of destruction). His ally and servant is a halfling rogue named Otis Benbough. Otis, a mercenary and a conniver, doesn't really understand or care about the evil priest's motives. Kor rewards Otis well for his services.

Kor Bloodaxe is posing as a young priest of Heironeous named Arrias the Young. Since arriving in the hamlet of Brookhollow, he has caused the death of the old priest of the Temple of Valor, recruited Otis, and allied himself with evil kobolds lurking in the Gnollwood north of the hamlet. With Otis's and the kobolds' aid, he has caused the disappearance of several travelers and townsfolk, and almost no one suspects his involvement.

The adventure begins when the PCs, responding to a request for aid sent to them by an adventurer friend, arrive in Brookhollow. There, they find everything normal except that their friend and her husband have disappeared. Investigation of their friend's disappearance leads them (hopefully) to uncover a great conspiracy.

During their investigation, the PCs attract the attention of Otis Benbough and, through him, Kor Bloodaxe. Both are concerned that the PCs might discover what they are doing and try to stop them.

In the end, the adventure comes down to a confrontation with Kor Bloodaxe and his evil minions. The exact location of this confrontation depends on the PCs' actions more than anything else. The final fight could occur in secret tunnels under the old churchyard, beneath the dark boughs of the Gnollwood, or even in Brookhollow itself.

Adventure Background

The hamlet of Brookhollow straddles Slipper River and survives on the produce of small farms and a modest lumber trade. Unremarkable in its own right, Brookhollow's history does prompt occasional interest from scholars and adventurers.

Many years ago—decades, if not centuries—a castle stood on the high plateau just north of Brookhollow. Indeed, it was the only fortification held by good forces in the entire region. It kept watch on the valley and the passes to the south, maintaining its vigil against evil humanoids and creatures of the wild. But Castle Overlook, as it was called, did not stand forever. War raged over the valley and, after a long siege, it became a haven for evil. Several years went by, and the corruption of Overlook extended into the valley. The verdant hills to the east were burned and ruined by armed camps, the river to the south became foul with their refuse, and monsters of darkness haunted the nearby woods.

Fortune changed again, however, and another siege ravaged the valley. The forces of good returned, cleansing the river, emptying the hills, and hunting through the dark wood. Although good triumphed over evil, fire and sorcery left the castle in ruin. It rests now atop the plateau and stands as a monument to the old conflict. Only one structure was saved—the great Temple of Valor, a tribute to the god Heironeous. His forces bore the brunt of the conflict, and survivors of that awful siege rebuilt the old temple that had been thrown down by darkness. Rather than rebuild amid the ruins of the defiled castle, however, they reassembled the temple on the southwestern edge of the plateau, at its lowest point. When they finished, the followers of Heironeous left a priest and a few acolytes in the structure to help those who came to them seeking aid or justice. The army moved on—most of it, anyway.

Many warriors died in the great siege of Castle Overlook, and many husbands, wives, and children were left behind. While the army would have absorbed these men, women, and children

Scaling the Adventure

Although this adventure is designed for 1st-level PCs, the module can be modified for higher level parties by increasing the number of opponents and making the main villains tougher. Here are a few general suggestions:

- Kor Bloodaxe (the main villain) should be 4 levels higher than the average party level.
- Otis Benbough (the secondary villain) should be 2 levels higher than the average party level.

2nd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written. Although 2nd-level PCs will find the adventure slightly less challenging than 1st-level PCs, they should still earn enough XP to reach 3rd level. If the PCs are having too easy a time, add a few more kobolds and skeletons.

3rd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, although the PCs will find the encounters much easier and probably won't amass enough XP to reach 4th level unless you increase the strength or number of opponents. Kor's undead minions might include some Large ogre zombies. You might replace the kobolds with goblins or orcs.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: PCs of this level will find the adventure, as written, quite easy. Consider giving Kor Bloodaxe two or three hired cohorts (fighters of level equal to the party's starting level), loyal acolytes (clerics of Hextor half the level of the party level), or hell hound pets. You can also give Kor some greater undead thralls (ghouls, for instance).

6th- to 7th-level PCs: This adventure was not written to challenge PCs of this level. You could assume that Kor has already broken into the catacombs under Castle Overlook and released a few "minor" denizens trapped within, or perhaps Kor has used *lesser planar ally* spells to garner aid from a barbazu devil or an erinyes devil.

If you increase the challenge of the adventure, you must also increase the amount of treasure to preserve the challenge-to-treasure ratio. This adventure has approximately 3,900 gp worth of treasure. To determine the amount of treasure needed, multiply 3,900 by the party's starting level. Thus, DMs wishing to modify the adventure for PCs starting out at 4th-level party should make sure the adventure includes about 15,600 gp (3,900 × 4) worth of treasure (coins, goods, and items).

back into their train of camp followers (as armies often do), most of these people desired peace and an end to their wandering ways. They thought the valley a good place—now that it was cleansed of evil—and they settled south of the temple, on either side of the river. They buried their dead behind the temple, took stock of their supplies, named their hamlet Brookhollow, and went on to prosper modestly in their portion of the great valley.

An Adventurer's Tale

The following contains information about Brookhollow, Castle Overlook, Lia Spellsong (the friend of the PCs whose letter draws them to the hamlet), and the plans of Kor Bloodaxe. None of it is readily available to the PCs but is, rather, background information. With luck and skill, the PCs might learn much or all of it before the adventure's climax.

After defeating the great evil in the valley, the army of good had no choice but to destroy Castle Overlook, hunting through the ruins for any lurking evil and driving it into the wastes to be destroyed by the waiting army. So foul were the beasts and magics used in the last battle that the eastern half of the valley remains uninhabitable. But the evil was defeated, or so Heironeous's champions thought.

They were wrong.

Evil had not simply occupied the castle; it had expanded it. Delving into the dark beneath the castle's foundation, the forces of evil made warrens, workshops, and secret treasuries. These vaults were buried, and what evil survived remained trapped within. The cleansing of the surface and the powerful divine magic used on the plateau kept the corruption underground, unable to win free. When the army moved on, they left this undiscovered malice entombed below.

Legends and rumors sprang up regarding secret treasures buried beneath the ruins of Castle Overlook. A few adventurers came to explore beneath the castle, but they found nothing of interest or value. Whatever remains in the castle's dark dungeons was buried too well and too deep for anyone to discover easily. No one was willing to risk a major operation on a mere legend, until recently.

A dark priest of Hextor has learned of the entombed evil beneath the ruins of Castle Overlook. Kor Bloodaxe came to the valley in the guise of an acolyte of Heironeous and assumed the fair demeanor of Arrias the Young. Through his unholy magic and cunning, he brought about the death of Darion, the old priest of Heironeous in the Temple of Valor, and took the man's place as "spiritual protector" of Brookhollow. Kor has devised a plan to tunnel underneath the ruins of Castle Overlook, using one of the large tombs behind the temple as a base of operations. He has made an alliance with the humanoids of the Gnollwood and has kidnapped several travelers and a few townsfolk, forcing them to work on his tunnel. His defilement of the Temple of Valor is made complete by his charade—as "young Arrias," he blunders his way through services and high holy days, and no one in Brookhollow seems the wiser. However, things are rarely what they seem.

Tacks the Miller, an old and somewhat grouchy individual, smells something fishy in Brookhollow, and it isn't coming from the Slipper River. A devout follower of Heironeous, he does not believe any acolyte of the god of Valor could be as bumbling as the young Arrias. He suspects something is wrong in the valley. Unfortunately, Tacks has few friends and is suspicious of just about everyone.

Tacks reawakened the rumors of treasure underneath Castle Overlook. He has hinted that some "dark force" lurks amid the ruins and that it has been keeping the treasure secret all these years. Tacks didn't dare say anything slanderous regarding "Arrias," but he made sure to include a story about how the new priest's ineptness at rituals has made the evil bold enough to venture forth from the ruins. These stories bore fruit quickly, but perhaps not in the abundance Tacks hoped. A single adventurer, accompanied by her husband, arrived in Brookhollow a few weeks later. To make matters worse, she wasn't a warrior or a paladin of Heironeous (even Tacks thought that too much to hope for); she was a bard. Still, when she started asking questions and poking around, Tacks decided to contact her and let her in on his suspicions.

Unfortunately, he waited too long. Tacks sent Lia a note, asking her to meet him, and received a confirmation, but neither Lia nor her husband Tory showed up. When Tacks finally inquired at the inn, he was informed that Lia and Tory had departed. Panic-stricken and convinced the two were the victims of foul play, Tacks didn't dare inquire any further and has spent little time outside of his mill ever since.

Before Lia disappeared, she managed to send out word herself. After looking over the ruins of Castle Overlook, she determined there was something there after all, but she realized she'd need help to uncover it. She sent a letter south to a trusted friend (one of the PCs) and kept up with her investigations. Unfortunately, her letter went south just before Tacks made contact with her, and Lia disappeared soon after.

One of the PCs received the following letter from their old friend, Lia Spellsong:

My friend,

I hope this letter finds you well and fit for travel. Tory and I are both well and in high spirits. We are currently engaged in an expedition of the ruins of a great castle and a small town named Brookhollow. I don't want to say more in this letter, as I have no idea how many eyes will see it before yours, but I think it would be worth your while to come and help us with our inquiries. I have enclosed directions to Brookhollow. Come seek me at Cutter's Inn.

Your friend,
Lia Spellsong

The directions referred to in the letter lead the PCs to Brookhollow along the road coming from the south. The adventure begins when the PCs enter Brookhollow.

Arriving in Brookhollow

Brookhollow is an amalgam of different races, all living together in relative harmony. Around two hundred men, women, and children live in or around Brookhollow, and about half of them live in what could properly be called the hamlet. Many of them are families of the lumberjacks who work the southern edge of the Gnollwood or hands drawing a wage at one of the nearby farms. (Both the Gnollwood and the farms are described below.)

♕ **Brookhollow (Hamlet)**: Non-standard; AL LG; 100-gp limit; Assets 10,000 gp; Population 200; Mixed (human 79%, halfling 9%, dwarf 5%, elf 3%, half-elf 2%, gnome 1%, half-orc 1%).

Authority Figures: Tril Cutter, female halfling Exp3 (innkeeper); Kerwin Corby, male dwarf Exp4 (blacksmith).

Important Characters: Arrias the Young, male human Clr5 (priest of Hextor); Otis Benbough, male halfling Rog4 (spy); Tacks, male human Exp3 (miller).

Others: William Shelby, War3 (constable); local militia, War1 (×9); Exp1 (×7); Brd1 (×1); Ftr1 (×2); Rog1 (×6); Com1 (×169).

Notes: While there are many private homes and farms in and around Brookhollow, the locations described below contain the most prominent people of the town and are the most likely to impact the plot of the adventure. The DM can flesh out additional homes or characters as needed.

A. Cutter's Inn. Few travelers pass through Brookhollow, but those who do usually head for Cutter's Inn. One of two multi-level buildings in the town (the mill is the other one), it also has all the tell-tale signs of an inn: large, open windows, a detached stable, long log tables in front (for spring and summer festivities), and a hanging sign displaying a giant, two-handed saw cutting through an oversized loaf of bread.

Cutter's Inn has three floors and a cold cellar. A common room and bar dominate the first floor. Maple and oak tables surrounded by long rail seats cover much of the floor. In the winter, much of the cooking is done in a great fireplace inside the common room. The small stove in the kitchen is used for individual meals and to heat the back of the inn.

The second floor overlooks the common room courtesy of a surrounding balcony. The heavy railing and sturdy stairs assure even the most drunken visitor a safe walk to her room in the middle of the night. There are a half-dozen large rooms on the second floor. During most of the year, at least half of them remain empty, but they can be full to bursting during spring festivals and various holidays throughout the year.

The attic is mostly storage. The innkeeper, Tril Cutter, keeps all manner of things in her attic, including a few old bits of weapons and armor (traded in years ago by frustrated adventurers for drinks, meals, and rooms). She hardly ever goes into the attic anymore and probably knows only about half of what's up there.

Cutter's Inn was the first structure built in the valley after the war, and it served as a field hospital and, later, temporary housing for the workers who rebuilt the Temple of Valor (which is probably the reason it has been built with the human-sized in mind). If Tril likes a body well enough, she'll show off some of the carvings made in the walls of her cold cellar by bored warriors recuperating from deadly wounds. Many of the original pillars and stone supports still stand down there, and scrawls denoting days spent in sickbed, crude symbols of Heironeous, and all manner of scratches can still be seen.

Creature (EL 0): Tril Cutter is a middle-aged halfling with a bright smile and a weathered face. She inherited the inn from her mother and boasts of how it's been in her family since before there was a Brookhollow.

Tril is one of Brookhollow's leaders. She is often called upon to settle disputes regarding bets and business deals, though she stays far away from any sort of legal arguments. She is on good terms with Kerwin Colby, the dwarven smith, but she dislikes Tacks the Miller. Currently, Tril has been seen often in the company of another halfling, Otis Benbough. Rumor has it that one or the other might "pop the question" before the year is out, and Tril secretly hopes Otis intends to wed her.

Tril knows all of Brookhollow's history, including the legends of treasure and monsters in and around the ruins of Castle Overlook (none of which she believes), and she is a good source of news for the area. Tril has heard rumors of disappearances in the valley, but she doesn't believe they're anything more than a few people wandering off to seek adventure in the wide world.

Tril Cutter, Female Halfling Exp3 (merchant): CR –; Small Humanoid (3 ft. tall); HD 3d6; hp 12; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+1 size, +2 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d6/crit 19-20, short sword), or +5 ranged (1d4, sling); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +4, Climb +2, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +3, Heal +4, Hide +9, Innuendo +4, Jump +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +2, Profession (merchant) +6, Sense Motive +3. *Feats*: Dodge, Skill Focus (Gather Information).

Possessions: Short sword, sling with 10 bullets, pouch containing five gems (100 gp each).

Running Tril: Tril remembers Lia Spellsong and her husband Tory well enough. She liked them; they paid for their rooms in coin, and both joined in the tale-telling and singing around the common room at night. They asked a lot of questions about the ruins of Castle Overlook, and Tril (and others) told them the tale of the castle and the founding of Brookhollow (which can be summarized from the "Adventure Background" above). She feels they left "awful suddenly," but she supposes they found there was nothing to the legends of treasure in the ruins and departed the sleepy hamlet.

Still, if given sufficient time and reason to think about it, Tril says it's strange that Lia and Tory left in such a hurry. They had paid up until the end of the week, and they departed with two days' room and board still paid for, leaving their key on the bar with no note or anything. (She found it during the lunch "rush.") She chalked the whole experience up to the eccentricity of adventurers and hasn't thought much about it since.

If at any time the PCs can convince Tril that Otis is linked to the disappearances of people in and around Brookhollow, she'll first go to pieces then help them in any way she can. Tril has enough standing in the community that she could raise up a small force of 2d4 warriors (nine maximum) and 2d6 commoners per day of trying. Kerwin Colby,

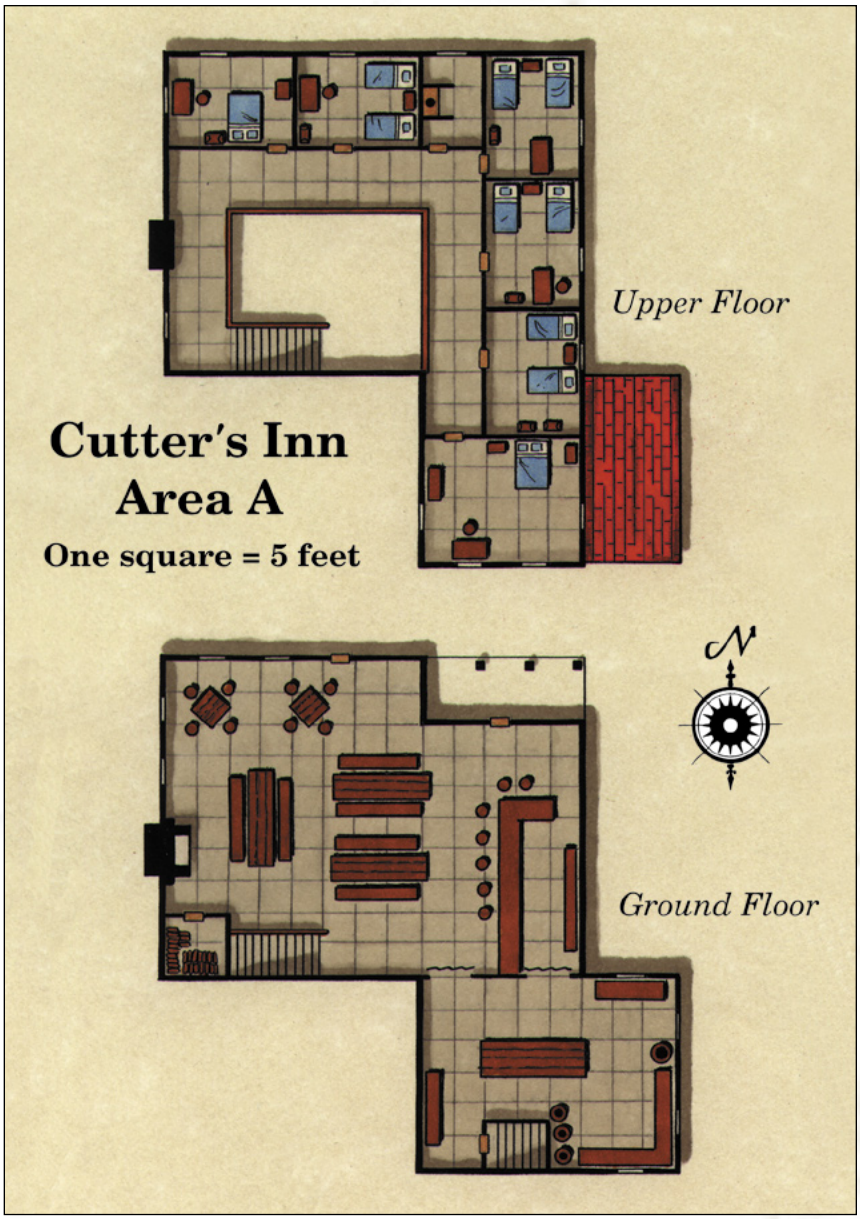
the smith and a friend of Tril's, would be among the first to volunteer.

Creature (EL 3): Otis lives at the inn as well, having rented the cheapest second-floor room (it looks out over the stable) on a month-by-month basis for the last year and a half. He occupies himself as a trapper and occasional hunter. His business often takes him south along the river (toward the swamp) or north into the Gnollwood for days at a time. Currently, he's spending most of his time in town (and around Tril), presumably living off the proceeds of his last hunting trip. Otis does not get along well with anyone in town except a few ne'er-do-wells and, of course, Tril. He has a particular dislike for Kerwin the Smith, and the feeling is mutual.

Otis Benbough, Male Halfling Rog3: CR 3; Small Humanoid (3 ft. tall); HD 3d6; hp 12; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +4 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6/crit 19-20, short sword); or +6 ranged (1d4, sling); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +4, Balance +7, Bluff +2, Climb +6, Disable Device +7, Disguise +2, Escape Artist +8, Forgery +3, Gather Information +2, Hide +11, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket +7, Search +4, Tumble +7, Use Magic Device +2. *Feats*: Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, sling with 10 bullets, pouch containing 80 gp.



Running Otis: Otis secretly works for Kor Bloodaxe as a spy, informer, and procurer of slaves. While Otis does make occasional forays into the swamps to check on his traps, his trips to the Gnollwood are at the behest of Kor Bloodaxe. (See the description of Arrias the Young, below, in area G.) He has allied himself with the kobold tribe lurking in the Gnollwood and is instrumental in seeking out and "discouraging" adventurers who might cause trouble in the valley for his master. Otis uses his relationship with Tril to great advantage—she is his excuse for hanging around the inn so much, and she shares her insights into people (especially travelers) with Otis. Otis has Tril convinced that he loves her, and she has given him free run of the inn.

Otis carefully watches newcomers who arrive in Brookhollow, informing Kor of any potential troublemakers. Otis planned and helped execute the disappearance of Lia and Tory and won't hesitate to make anyone else "disappear." If the PCs start asking questions, he will watch and perhaps even tail them (if they go wandering around the area). He'll try not to be too obvious about it, but Otis likes earning the money Kor pays him.

Careful not to attract too much attention, Otis seldom approaches strangers (or anyone, for that matter, since he's not particularly well-liked by anyone in town except Tril) and avoids calling attention to himself. He is devious, suspicious, and not above putting local ruffians up to mischief (particularly if he feels the need to "size up" opponents) or using his skills to break into someone else's room.

If the PCs manage to confront Otis directly, he'll react differently depending on what they want. If they ask him questions about Lia or Tory, he feigns ignorance and then responds that he remembers Tril talking about them. "A nice couple," he says, "or that's what Tril said, anyway. I never talked to them—I was away south, checking my traps in the swamp." Otis then goes on about the poor hunting and trapping he's had this season, hoping to bore PCs into looking elsewhere. Unfortunately for him, there are those that

Otis Attacks

If Otis Benbough has reason to suspect the PCs are investigating the disappearances of people around Brookhollow, or he just sees an opportunity to add them to Kor Bloodaxe's growing legion of slaves, he'll try one of several plots to kidnap or eliminate them. The following are "standard" plans Otis might use, but they can be modified by circumstance:

The Letter (EL 3, +2 if kobolds are present, +2 if rogues are present): This is the plan Otis used to kidnap Lia Spellsong and her husband Tory. Otis slips a letter to one of the PCs without their knowing, suggesting a late-night rendezvous. Otis's favorite meeting site is Log's Landing (though he won't pick that place if it's too close to the lumberjacks' arrival—see area C for details) and desolate stretches of road. His favorite accomplices are a group of six kobolds along with their leader, Skliks Dogear.

Skliks Dogear, Male Kobold Sor1: CR 1; Small Reptilian Humanoid (2 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural); Atk -2 melee (1d4-2, dagger); SA poison (see below); SD darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills: Alchemy +2, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Hide +5, Knowledge (arcana) +1, Move Silently +3, Profession (mining) +2, Search +2, Spellcraft +1. *Feat*: Alertness.

Spells (5/4, chosen from the following list): 0—*ghost sound, resistance, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*magic weapon, true strike*.

Possessions: Dagger, clay jar containing four applications of huge centipede venom (see *SA—Poison* below), 25 sp in pouch.

SA—Poison (Ex): Skliks coats his dagger with huge centipede venom. Anyone stabbed by the dagger suffers damage (minimum 1 point); 1 minute later, the victim must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) or take 1d4 points of temporary Dexterity damage. Lost Dexterity points recover at a rate of 1 per day of rest. After one successful strike with the dagger, the poison must be reapplied (requiring a full action).

SQ—Light Sensitivity (Ex): Skliks suffers a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Kobolds (6): CR 1/6; Small Reptilian Humanoid (2 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1/2d8; hp 2 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +2 armor); Atk -1 melee (1d6-2, halfspear); or +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SD darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +8, Move Silently +4, Profession (mining) +2, Search +2. *Feat*: Alertness.

Possessions: Leather armor, halfspear, light crossbow with 6 bolts.

SQ—Light Sensitivity (Ex): See above.

If the kobolds are unavailable, Otis might use thugs from Brookhollow with the following stats:

Local Thugs, Male Human Rog1 (4): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d6; hp 5 each; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 armor, +1 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d6/crit 19-20, short sword); or +1 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -1; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +1, Hide +5, Listen +1, Move Silently +5, Open Lock +3, Pick Pocket +5, Read Lips +3, Search +1, Spot +1, Tumble +4. *Feats*: Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, light crossbow with 10 bolts.

The Ambush: If the PCs have been moving around the valley, Otis might organize a quick attack. He won't do anything within the confines of Brookhollow, but anywhere else—the open roads out of town, the Waste, or the castle ruins—serves him well. Since Otis might not have time to get all his resources in play, he'll use what he can find. He might hire some thugs but, if he has time, he'll get the kobolds. Given a chance (if the ambush occurs in the Waste), Otis tries to get Kor to give him a few undead with orders to obey him.

The Churchyard: If Otis or Kor feel desperate, they confront the PCs right at the doors of the Temple of Valor. If the PCs investigate the temple without visiting "Arrias" on the up-and-up (say, they sneak into the area at night), Otis assumes they've cracked a significant portion of the mystery and alerts Kor. Kor then sends twice the normal number of undead to attack them (backed up by Otis; see "Encounters in the Wilderness" for details) but himself retreats into the catacombs beneath the churchyard.

definitely remember Otis hanging around the inn during Lia and Tory's stay—both Tril and Kerwin Colby, the blacksmith, would attest to this if they heard about Otis's lie. This shows how nervous Otis is regarding Kor's plot—he knows he's in something big and dangerous, and he doesn't want to "disappear."

Should the PCs learn of Otis's duplicity, perhaps by catching him in a lie or finding out about his involvement with the kobolds of Gnollwood, he tries to escape or fight before betraying his involvement with Kor. Only on pain of death does he give up his master—he has seen enough of Kor's unholy power to know he's no match for the priest.

Creature (EL 0): The only other prominent inn regular is Kerwin Colby, the town blacksmith and a dwarf of incredible strength and girth. Kerwin runs the local smithy and spends most of his time fixing axes, saws, and plowshares for the locals. He can make and repair weapons, and even has a few in stock. Between Kerwin's shop and the local "general store" (which Kerwin's assistant runs), the PCs can buy just about anything found in a hamlet this size (anything worth 100 gp or less, up to a total of 1,000 gp worth of equipment).

Kerwin is another of the unofficial "town leaders" and shares the same level of respect as Tril Cutter. He is loud and boisterous and loves to drink and eat—making him one of Tril's favorite customers. He works from sunup to a few hours past sundown, then spends the evening at the inn, and, when he finally goes to bed, snores for only a couple of hours before starting all over again. He doesn't understand laziness or dishonesty and can be unintentionally rude when confronted with anything approaching subtlety.

The smith loathes the halfling trapper, Otis Benbough. Still, Kerwin doesn't cause trouble with Otis (for Tril's sake) and simply avoids the sneaky halfling whenever he can. He almost

certainly introduces himself to strangers, buying a round or two at the bar, and he claims to know everything about Brookhollow. After he's had a few drinks, he might admit that he "doesn't see eye-to-eye with Otis Benbough," referring to Tril's infatuation with the man by saying things like "poor Tril's got it bad." He thinks of Tacks the Miller as "a grouchy old miser who's nevertheless fair—even though he can pinch a copper with his buttocks cheeks!" He has a hundred other summations for everyone around town. Perhaps his most fateful judgment of character concerns Arrias (Kor): "Now there's a boy who's got his head on straight! Sure, he's a little clumsy and he's got a lot to learn, but he's devoted to Heironeous! There's a lad who knows what he's gonna be doing twenty years from now!"

Kerwin Colby, Male Dwarf Exp4 (blacksmith): CR –; Medium-Size Humanoid (4 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 4d6+8; hp 25; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (-1 Dex, +4 chain shirt); Atk +7 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, warhammer); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +6 (+8 for stone and metal items), Craft (blacksmithing) +8, Craft (weaponsmithing) +8, Handle Animal +3, Listen +2, Profession (blacksmith) +5, Profession (weaponsmith) +5, Spot +2, Use Rope +2. *Feats*: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus—Craft (weaponsmithing).

Possessions: Chain shirt, light hammer, pouch containing 50 gp and three gems (10 gp each).

Running Kerwin: Kerwin is one of the few inn patrons actually worried about the recent disappearances. As blacksmith, he has regular contact with the farmers, hunters, trappers, and loggers—all the people from outside the hamlet proper—and he's heard of more than a few people who've gone missing over the past few months. Unfortunately, Kerwin doesn't like to think about unpleasant things and, unless the PCs bring it up, he won't broach the subject. Still, he can confirm that there have been disappearances in and around Gnollwood and elsewhere. Mention of this might cause him to wonder aloud (if he's had enough to drink) why Otis isn't worried—the halfling trapper makes treks to the swamp at least a couple times a month to check his traps.

One other notable thing about Kerwin: He is frightened of the ruins of Castle Overlook, and he doesn't really know why. He'll deny believing the stories of treasure or even monsters lurking up there, but he visited the ruins once, long ago, and he feels there's something unwholesome about the place. He'll try to dissuade anyone from going up there, and if he hears that Lia and Tory were exploring the ruins, he'll shake his head and blame their interest in "old evil" for their apparent disappearance.

Clues at the Inn

If the PCs investigate Lia and Tory's room, they find it immaculate and ready for new occupants. (In fact, Tril might offer it to the PCs if they want to spend the night.) Only a successful Search skill check (DC 15) reveals anything interesting. The pair must have suspected that something unusual was going on in Brookhollow, for they carefully pried up one of the floorboards, cut the nails, and replaced the boards to make a small, secret compartment in the floor by the foot of the bed. In the secret compartment, they stored the following: a small notebook, a broken amulet, and a torn pouch with a letter inside. The notebook is obviously Lia's and contains (among other things) notes regarding her travels to Brookhollow. It's written in shorthand, however, so only bits of information can be deduced. These include the following statements. (The dates are relative to when the PCs arrived in town; if they examine the notebook later than the first day they arrived in Brookhollow, adjust the time frame accordingly.)

[Dated three weeks ago] *"Heard tales of treasure and evil in place called Brookhollow, Overlook. Research reveals great battle fought there, many years ago. Evil destroyed? Buried? Tales conflict. Disappearances and evil now. Must investigate."*

[Dated two weeks ago] *"Arrived Brookhollow. Pleasant village; friendly people. Staying at Cutter's Inn; reasonable rates—great pie! No one has said anything about evil creatures or disappearances. Will ask around."*

[Thirteen days ago] *"Questioning so far fruitless. Tril Cutter friendly, but she knows nothing. Her boyfriend is pretty nosy but appears harmless. Everything seems normal. Will check out ruins tomorrow."*

[Twelve days ago] *"T and I searched ruins, found nothing until this! Broken amulet; I remember symbol well—Hextor, god of destruction! Something is up there!"*

[Ten days ago, last entry] *"Received strange message today—two, actually. Found first slipped under my door. 'Meet me at Log's Landing, 10 P.M.' The other was left in a pouch and slipped into T's pack while he was at the store: 'Must see you regarding great evil—come to Log's Landing at midnight.' Well, one after the other, I suppose."*

PCs who examine the amulet and make a successful Knowledge (religion) skill check (DC 10) confirm that it bears the symbol of Hextor. It is not particularly old—the leather cord on the amulet has worn away but still seems comparatively new. The torn pouch is obviously the one slipped into Tory's pack. A successful Search check (DC 12) reveals wheat grist jammed into the seams of the pouch, as if someone had packed it full of rough grain—perhaps many times, judging from the age of the grist. The letter inside the pouch says exactly what Lia wrote in her journal.

The journal provides an obvious clue that Lia and Tory either didn't leave Brookhollow of their own volition or they left suddenly and unexpectedly. This information can be critical to the adventure, depending on how it is used. Less obviously, it confirms that the pair met Otis at least once, despite what he might have said to the PCs.

If the PCs reveal the journal to Tril Cutter, she is both alarmed and confused. She knows Lia and Tory left the inn—they took their things with them and disappeared. She didn't check them out herself, but they left the key on the bar. If they left during the night, she would have found their key during breakfast, and not lunch.

While there's no way for the PCs to prove it, the truth is Tril didn't find the key earlier because it wasn't there. Otis sent the note asking Lia and Tory to meet him at Log's Landing then, accompanied by a group of kobolds, he attacked the pair and dragged them off to the Temple of Valor where Kor Bloodaxe took charge of them. Otis returned the next day, cleaned out the couple's room, and left the key on the bar in the hopes of making it look like the two adventurers had left town sud-

denly. Unfortunately, the whole operation took longer than he expected, and he wasn't able to get back to Cutter's until mid-morning. Still, no one saw him with the key, and Tril never asked him about it.

If Otis learns the PCs have found these items (if Tril finds out, she tells him eventually), he immediately reports it to Kor. Kor orders Otis to eliminate the PCs as quickly as possible. Otis responds in one of several ways, as detailed in the "Otis Attacks" sidebar).

Kor Bloodaxe lost the amulet while prowling around the ruins of Castle Overlook about a year ago; because he's been in disguise ever since, he didn't realize that he'd lost it. If he sees it, he instructs Otis to eliminate the PCs.

The pouch once belonged to Tacks the Miller; the grist in the seams comes from his mill. The pouch is a standard size he uses to measure his allotments. For more information on Tacks, see area **B** below.

B. The Mill. The second largest structure in Brookhollow, the mill sits just downstream of the wide pond and on the east bank of Slipper River. Its sizeable water-wheel is protected from the occasional rush of logs (sent from Log Landing to the north) by thick stone pillars.

Creature (EL 0): Tacks the Miller, an elderly human with an unpleasant demeanor, runs the mill along with two weary apprentices (male human Com1; hp 3) and his niece, Cammy (female human Com1; hp 2). Tacks doesn't get along well with most of the people of Brookhollow. He feels that Tril Cutter is overly sympathetic to the farmers, and the two have exchanged bitter words. He knows Kerwin Colby likes Tril very much, but he gets along with the dwarf on those rare occasions Tacks sees him. Most of the farmers dislike Tacks out of their general distrust for millers; he grinds their wheat into grain and, as payment, keeps a portion of each load. While Tacks is scrupulously honest (some, like the smith, would call him a "copper-crusher"), his attitude makes farmers feel like they're being overcharged.

While abrasive in his manner, Tacks is a good and honest person. His two apprentices and his niece Cammy are orphans. (They know nothing beyond what Tacks knows.) He hopes to save enough money so that when he passes away, Cammy can hire someone to help her run the mill properly.

Encounters in the Wilderness

For every hour the PCs spend outside the town, roll percentile dice (d%) on the following table:

Encounters: Outside Town (Roll d%)	
No Encounter	01-50
Wolves	51-60
Boar	61-70
Kobold Raiding Party	71-85
Escaped Traveler	86-00

For every hour the PCs spend in the Waste (area **E**), roll percentile dice (d%) on the following table for an encounter:

Encounters: The Waste (Roll d%)	
No Encounter	01-60
Wolves	61-70
Kobold Raiding Party	71-85
Undead	86-95
Escaped Traveler	96-00

Wolves (EL 4): A pack of wolves, driven out of their normal hunting grounds by the kobolds, attacks the PCs.

Wolves (4): CR 1; Medium-Size Animal; HD 2d8+4; hp 13 each; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

SQ–Scent (Ex): Wolves can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponents are upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

Boar (EL 2): The PCs come across a wild boar. It attacks fearlessly until slain.

Boar (1): CR 2; Medium-Size Animal (4 ft. tall); HD 3d8+9; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+6 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, bite); SA ferocity; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +5.

SA–Ferocity (Ex): A boar is such a tenacious combatant that it continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying (see Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*).

SQ–Scent (Ex): See wolves above.

Kobold Raiding Party (EL 1, 2 if Skliks is present): Six kobolds out hunting for prisoners or just looking for mischief stumble upon the PCs. There is a 1-in-4 chance the kobolds are led by their leader, Skliks Dogear. (Consult the "Otis Attacks" sidebar for their statistics.)

Undead (EL 2): Kor Bloodaxe has used *animate dead* spells to populate the Waste with undead servants. When he wishes to make new undead, he turns the "surplus" out into the wild to wreak havoc on unsuspecting travelers. An undead encounter consists of two skeletons and three zombies. Use the statistics for skeletons and zombies in area **H**.

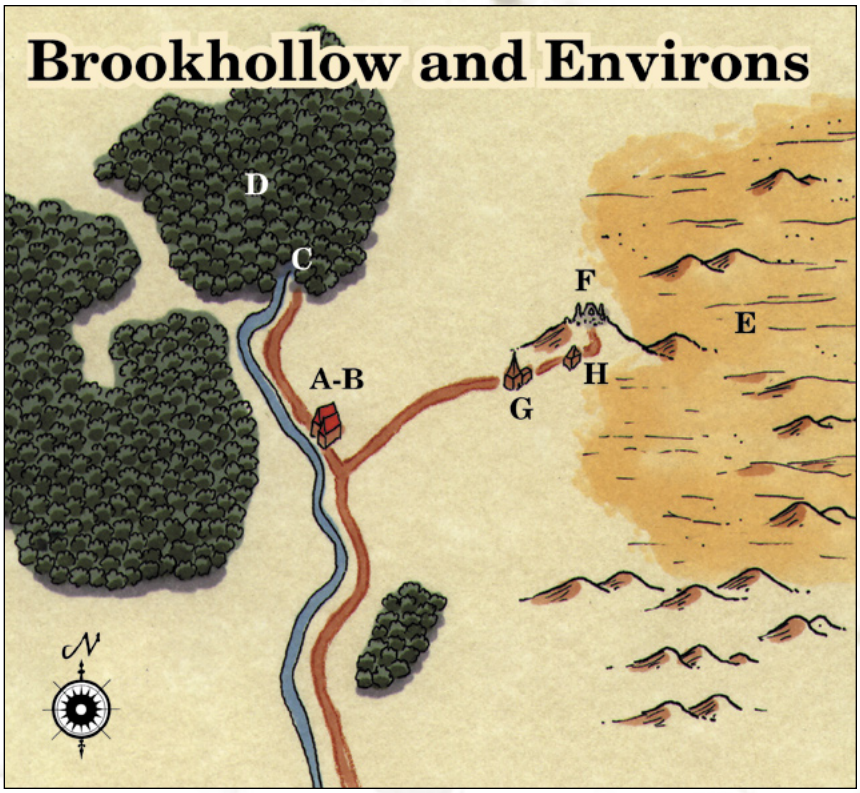
Escaped Traveler (EL 0): The kobolds have raided the lumber camp, bushwhacked travelers on the road, and even tried raiding a few farms in the recent past. While they are quiet and stealthy and backed by the magic of their leader, they aren't always successful. A few travelers (human Com1; hp 1d4) might have escaped. If the PCs find these wounded and terrified individuals, they can learn any or all of the following by making a simple Gather Information skill check (DC 5):

- "The darned kobolds caught me! They dragged me back to their camp in the Gnollwood, and one of them–I think he was their leader–sent another off to tell someone. I don't know who he was talking about, but he looked really happy."
- "While I was a prisoner of the kobolds, they met with somebody. I couldn't understand what they were saying, but I know the other guy wasn't a kobold. He spoke slower, like he had a hard time with their language, and his voice didn't sound as rough or as vile. I heard coins jingling several times, but the kobold leader seemed mad or something. He sent the other guy away."
- "Somebody came to visit the kobolds while I was a prisoner–it must have been more than a week ago. He jingled some coins and I heard the kobolds squeal in glee. Most of 'em, including their leader, went away with him. That's when I escaped."

Tacks, Male Human Exp3 (miller): CR –; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 3d6+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL LG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +5 (includes Iron Will feat); Str 11, Dex 10, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Appraise +3, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +3, Profession (miller) +8, Ride +3, Spot +3, Swim +4. *Feats*: Iron Will, Skill Focus–Profession (miller), Toughness.

Possessions: Leather vest, dagger, pouch containing 30 gp and 45 sp.



Running Tacks: Tacks the Miller lives in desperate fear. His one friend was Darion, the old priest of Heironeous at the Temple of Valor. He knew the man was getting on in years and had requested an acolyte or two be sent to take over for him, but he doesn't believe Darion died of natural causes just after Arrias the Young arrived in town—he thinks someone killed the old priest.

Unfortunately, despite his personal dislike for Arrias (he thinks "the child is a bumbler and not worthy of Heironeous"), he doesn't suspect the young priest of anything more than incompetence. He thinks the humanoids of the Gnollwood have made contact with some buried evil in the castle ruins and that the disappearance of travelers is linked to their efforts. (Tacks is one of the few people of Brookhollow who believes there's an actual tribe of humanoids lurking in the Gnollwood, not just a few scattered individuals.) He has no idea how they're communicating with the evil, but he's convinced someone in town is helping them. Tacks admits, however, that he doesn't know the other townsfolk well enough to guess who might be responsible.

Conversations with Tacks must be handled carefully. Since Lia and Tory's disappearance, the poor miller thinks he'll be next. He's convinced that the two were kidnapped or killed because they were asking questions and trying to discover what evil lay beneath the ruins of Castle Overlook. If the PCs push Tacks too much, he might panic and do something unpredictable—like packing up and running with his niece to another town, or seeking the sanctuary of the Temple of Valor. With what Tacks knows and suspects, that could have lethal consequences for Tacks and his family.

If the PCs are considerate and make a good first impression, Tacks tells them everything he knows about luring Lia and Tory to Brookhollow, about his suspicions concerning humanoids in the Gnollwood, about the disappearances, and about his feeling that a traitor is living in Brookhollow. Tacks will even offer up some of his life savings as a reward for the PCs if they can uncover whatever's going on in Brookhollow and make it stop. The DM can either adjudicate this through roleplaying or require PCs to make a Diplomacy skill check to earn Tacks' trust (DC 15), followed by a Gather Information skill check (DC 10). If the PCs fail the Diplomacy skill check, the Gather Information skill check becomes much harder (DC 20). Conversely, the PCs can try to intimidate Tacks into divulging what he knows; this requires a successful Intimidation skill check (DC 12).

Should the PCs show Tacks the amulet of Hextor (which can be found in Lia and Tory's room), he recognizes it as an evil holy symbol. If the PCs tell him it was found at the castle ruins, he'll take it as proof that minions of Hextor are trying to uncover some evil buried below Castle Overlook.

C. Log's Landing. The lumberjacks working along the southern edge of the Gnollwood built and use the large dock known as Log's Landing as a shipping point for their product. They bring large, heavily laden wagons down Woods' End Road from the Gnollwood lumber camp and dump the timber in the river. They float it downstream, through the mill pond (to Tacks's disgust), and down where the Slipper River is strong enough to pull the logs along on their own. The camp often hires men to travel along the river and make sure logjams do not occur.

Log's Landing consists of the wooden dock (to which a pair of barges are usually tethered), a large storage warehouse, six rustic cabins large enough to accommodate eight Medium-size occupants, and a paddock where horses can be tethered. It is either a hive of great activity or an eerily empty dockyard; there is no in-between. The camp leaders like to move as many logs through the landing as they can at one time, knowing their workers like to spend a few days in Brookhollow after a "harvest." So as not to interrupt their work schedules, the camp leaders put off trips down the south road until they have several full timber wagons.

It's been almost three weeks since the last time Log's Landing was used; the lumberjacks are due for a visit. Indeed,

they show up with several full wagonloads of cut timber within three days of the PCs' arrival. This is important because Log's Landing has something to tell the PCs, depending on when they get here.

If the PCs have found Lia's diary and go to Log's Landing before the next arrival of lumberjacks (or if they do so just because they want to see the place), searching the area near the docks reveals something interesting. PCs who make a successful Search skill check (DC 15) find a small, crude knife jammed between the rough logs of the dock. If the PCs look below the dock, they find (no Search check required, but they have to specifically say they're looking beneath the dock) a broken set of pipes (like those a musician might use) and a torn and gaudy red-and-yellow cloak trampled into the mud.

Any character who makes a successful Search skill check (DC 10) spots footprints in the mud under the dock. A successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 15) reveals that these are mostly kobold tracks mixed with an indeterminate number of human-sized tracks. All of them disappear quickly as they move away from below the dock, and only characters with the Track feat can attempt to follow them. Following the tracks for one mile requires the Track feat and a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 19 during the day, DC 22 at night). See the Track feat description in Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for tracking modifiers. The tracks head toward the ruins of Castle Overlook but they seem to disappear a couple miles before reaching the ruins. PCs with the Track feat who make a difficult Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 27 during the day, DC 30 at night) can follow faint tracks to the churchyard of the Temple of Valor. (Note that the PCs can take 10 or take 20 on these Search and Wilderness Lore skill checks.)

Log's Landing is where Otis Benbough set a trap for Lia Spellsong and her husband Tory. He sent them a message (see "Clues at the Inn" above), luring them to Log's Landing at night. When they arrived, his kobold allies emerged from beneath the dock, dragged them underneath the wooden structure, bound them, and hauled them overland to the Temple of Valor. Otis had some trouble convincing the kobolds not to kill them (Lia wounded two of the kobolds, causing one of them to lose his knife), and the trip took longer than expected.

If the PCs don't investigate Log's Landing before the lumberjacks arrive, most of the clues (including any tracks leading toward Castle Overlook and the Temple of Valor) will be destroyed or lost in the bustle of unloading the timber into the river. However, one of the lumberjacks finds the knife and brings it to Cutter's Inn. There, she shows it off to anyone who's there, and it becomes the talk of Brookhollow as Kerwin pronounces it of kobold manufacture. Rumors of kobold raiders run rampant through the town, and the smith insists kobolds must be behind the disappearances.

D. The Gnollwood. Named for the humanoid race that used to inhabit it, the Gnollwood hasn't been home to gnolls since well before the first fall of Castle Overlook. Still, the trees are twisted and the wood is dark, making it a dangerous place for travelers to wander. Fortunately, few people have reason to go deep into the forest.

The dangers of the forest include wild boars, wolves, and even a few monstrous creatures, but the greatest threat to the safety of the valley is the Gnollwood's most recently arrived inhabitants: a small tribe of kobolds. Living mostly in the darkest part of the woods to the north, the kobolds send out small hunting and scouting parties to the southern areas and into the Waste (area **E**) east of Castle Overlook. They want to become the dominant force in the valley, but they fear organized resistance from Brookhollow.

If the PCs explore the Gnollwood, refer to the "Encounters in the Wilderness" sidebar.

E. The Waste. Once a fertile area of hills and green grass, the Waste is aptly named. The second battle of Castle Overlook took place mainly east of the plateau, and the same magic that blasted the castle tore through the hills here, and the land has never recovered.

Few people of Brookhollow have any reason to venture into the Waste, and it is a good thing for them. It has secretly become a dumping ground of evil. Kor Bloodaxe creates undead to work on his secret project (as described in area **G**) but makes more than he wants to control—releasing them into the Waste, perhaps hoping he'll be able to use them later.

If the PCs explore the Waste, refer to the "Encounters in the Wilderness" sidebar. While they probably won't learn anything there beyond the fact that an inordinate number of undead roam the area, that's enough to shock and concern the citizens of Brookhollow.

Even if Otis Benbough doesn't have reason to be concerned that the PCs are aware of Kor's plot, a trip by the PCs into the Waste might be too good of an opportunity to pass up. If he can follow them into the Waste, he'll make an effort to capture or kill them; see the "Otis Attacks" sidebar.

F. Castle Overlook. Built on a high plateau near the center of the valley, the once-great Castle Overlook is little more than heaps of fallen stone. Only the northwest tower remains intact. Moss and ivy cover most of the gray, weather-beaten blocks. Missing stones combined with rotted steps make it difficult to ascend safely to its heights.

Holy warriors, camp followers, adventurers, curious townsfolk, and even children have picked through Castle Overlook's ruins in the decades following the war. Few have found anything worthwhile. Some have come away with a disturbing feeling—like Kerwin Colby, the blacksmith. Most have put the ruined castle out of their minds.

PCs who search the ruins might find Lia and Tory's tracks and a few areas where the two dug in the dirt or moved aside large stones. They will almost certainly discover a small camp made by the two in the base of the still-standing tower. A successful Search skill check (DC 10) near the tower reveals scratch marks made in a large, flat stone by the stairs. (PCs can take 10 or take 20 on this roll.) The pattern on the stone crudely represents the layout of the castle ruins, but there is a large star scraped into the center. A cursory examination of the land outside the tower reveals no such star.

If the PCs spend a few minutes walking around the area where the star appears to be and make a successful Search skill check (DC 12), they find the moss and dirt in the vicinity loose and easy to move. (Lia and Tory dug it up and then replaced it later.) Underneath lies a giant, stone slab. It has no markings but appears to be of a different mineral than the stone of the rest of the castle. A dwarf PC instantly recognizes the stained rock as a type of marble—the kind often used by dwarves and some humans as a burial marker. This stone is nearly 30 feet

in diameter—it would be incredibly difficult and time consuming for someone to bring it up the steep trail leading to the plateau and place it here.

Any dwarf PC who spends time looking at the castle is bound to walk over the hidden marble. Even if the dwarf does not see the marble, she begins to feel uneasy. Further, a dwarf who uncovers the marble slab gets the distinct impression that the slab is unnatural and unsettling in some way. This is an instinctual thing, tied to the dwarves' uncanny ability to identify unusual stonework, and cannot be explained. The stone isn't magical, and what lies beneath it is buried very deep, but it is disturbing nonetheless.

If the PCs discover the slab and don't replace the sod before they leave, or if they talk about the slab and Otis hears about it, he reports their investigation to Kor, who will order Otis to make them "disappear." Otis acts as outlined in the "Otis Attacks" sidebar.

G. Temple of Valor. Constructed from the ruins of the old temple (that once stood tall in Castle Overlook, before the forces of evil claimed the castle), the Temple of Valor is a small, stone chapel with two rooms. The main room contains a few benches and a modest altar. The otherwise bare walls are adorned with bas-relief depictions of Heironeous's symbol: an unsheathed sword.

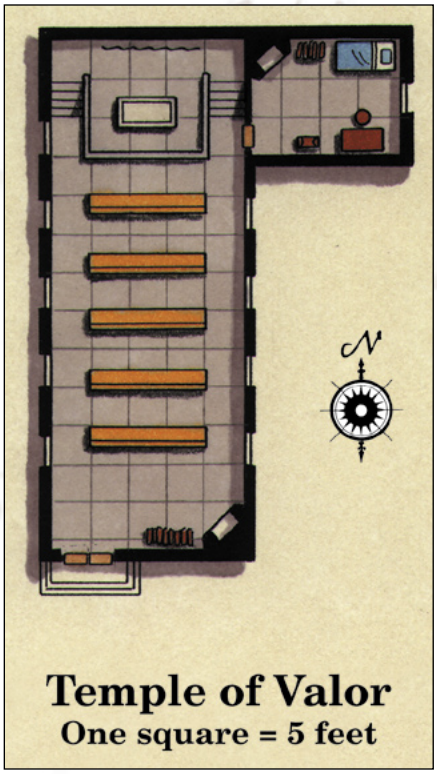
The small, attached room seems much too tiny for more than one person, but in earlier days it housed a priest and one or two acolytes. Now, it is the living quarters for Kor Bloodaxe, who has disguised himself as Arrias the Young.

Kor is rather proud of his plan to infiltrate the valley. He scouted the area by talking to travelers and sending a few of Hextor's minions and hired mercenaries on recon missions. Otis Benbough was one of those mercenaries, and he stayed on after his initial investigations. Otis learned of the former priest's declining health and of the man's request for a replacement (though Tril). He ambushed the messenger and sent word to Kor, who then assumed the role of Arrias the Young and arrived at the temple a few weeks later.

After his arrival, it wasn't difficult for "Arrias" to poison the old priest and step into his shoes. Posing as a somewhat blundering acolyte, Kor has managed to drive away most of the temple's small congregation. Then he began his plan in earnest.

Kor selected a mausoleum to the northeast of the churchyard and began to dig. He and Otis began capturing travelers and, using Kor's ability to create undead, forced the terrified slaves to dig for them. Kor has more than a dozen slaves tunneling underneath the churchyard and toward the old ruins. He feeds his slaves and does the bare minimum to keep them alive, animating those who do not survive.

Guided by Hextor's unholy influence, Kor knows that tunnels riddle the plateau under Castle Overlook. Only a few more weeks of tunneling, Kor believes, and he will reach the catacombs at last.



Creature (EL 5): While supervising the excavation under the churchyard, Kor wears scale mail armor (+4 AC bonus, -4 armor check penalty) and keeps a small steel shield handy (+1 AC bonus, -1 armor check penalty).

Kor Bloodaxe, Human Male Clr5 (Hextor): CR 5; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 5d8; hp 32; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor); AC 10 or 15 (+4 scale mail armor, +1 shield); Atk +4 melee (1d6+2, *+1 light mace*); SA smite; SQ rebuke, command, or bolster undead (4×/day); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +6, Heal +8, Knowledge (religion) +5, Listen +3, Spellcraft +2, Scry +4, Spot +3. *Feats*: Blind-Fight, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw.

Possessions: Scale mail armor, small steel shield, *+1 light mace*, *potion of cure light wounds*, divine scroll (*sanctuary*), iron keys to the door and chest in area **H6**.

Spells (5/3/2/1): 0—*cure minor wounds* (×2), *detect magic, guidance, light;* 1st—*bane, cause fear, cure light wounds, doom;* 2nd—*darkness, death knell, sound burst;* 3rd—*animate dead.*

Domain Spells (Destruction, Evil): 1st—*inflict light wounds;* 2nd—*desecrate;* 3rd—*animate dead.* Kor casts *desecrate* as a 6th-level priest.

SA—Smite (Su): Kor has the supernatural ability to make a single melee attack with a +4 attack bonus and a +5 damage bonus. If the attack misses, the smite is wasted. Kor can attempt to smite a foe once per day.

Running Kor: If the PCs visit the Temple of Valor during the day, a young, somewhat sloppy-looking priest wearing the robes and symbols of an acolyte of Heironeous greets them after a short delay. He is tall, muscular blond man with a scar along his forehead (a childhood accident, he'll say, if anyone asks), and he introduces himself as Arrias. If he appears tired or frazzled, he'll explain he's been studying the old priest's books in an effort to learn more and be a better priest for the people of Brookhollow. In reality, he is spending most of his nights in the tunnels below the nearby mausoleum (see below).

"Arrias" claims to know nothing about the disappearances in the valley or about the rumors of evil in the ruins. Kor is no fool, however, and plays the inexperienced apprentice role only as long as it suits him. If the PCs come to the temple with stories of undead wandering the Waste or kobolds in the Gnollwood, Arrias volunteers to help, even to the extent of venturing out into the wild with the PCs. In reality, Kor takes the first opportunity to contact Otis and set up an ambush (as described in the "Otis Attacks" sidebar).

If the PCs go snooping around the Temple of Valor or the churchyard, or do anything to make Kor think they know he's not really what he says he is, the priest of Hextor contacts Otis and uses undead to attack the PCs and drag them below to the

tunnels. If things don't go well for Kor, he flees to the tunnels and has no compunction about using his prisoners as hostages to ensure his safe escape.

H. Gray Mausoleum. A thin, winding trail leads from the Temple of Valor up the steep slope to the ruins of Castle Overlook. Along the way, it passes an immense and ancient churchyard filled with overgrown graves and dark tombs. The northeasternmost structure is also the largest. The survivors of the battle of Overlook built this gray and imposing tomb for five of their great heroes. No doubt Kor Bloodaxe feels it fitting that the mausoleum now serves Hextor's purposes.

Below the tomb, Kor has excavated a long tunnel heading toward the plateau underneath the castle ruins. The tunnel is mostly hard-packed dirt with timber supports, but some areas are lined with stone blocks. The farther north the excavation goes, the rougher the corridors and rooms become.

The stone door of the mausoleum grates loudly when opened or closed and can be heard as far down the tunnels as area **H3**. PCs inspecting the door closely can make a Spot skill check (DC 10); a successful check reveals scratch marks at the top and base of the stone doorway, suggesting that the door has been opened and closed frequently.

H1. Hall of Heroes. Read the second paragraph only if Kor has opened the sarcophagi in this chamber (as detailed below):

> Five tall statues of long-dead warriors look down on the dimly lit room. Five sarcophagi with stony faces sleep under their watchful gaze. Dirt litters the stone floor; dust hangs in the air.
>
> You notice that the lids of the sarcophagi are slid back, creating an opening at the head of each one. An unpleasant scratching noise foreshadows the sudden appearance of a bony hand reaching out of each sarcophagus.

Five of Heironeous's great warriors lie in state beneath the five sarcophagi in this tomb. Five 8-foot-tall statues of these great paladins stand watch over the room.

The room is dirty and dusty. PCs searching the east wall of the tomb who make a successful Search skill check (DC 20) locate a false door (built by Kor) below the base of the central statue. There is more dirt around the feet of the central statue (which might lead the PCs to investigate it more closely). The statue stands on hidden rollers and can be pushed off the trapdoor with a successful Strength check (DC 15).

Moving the lid of a sarcophagus requires a successful Strength check (DC 12 to slide the lid, DC 20 to lift the lid). Other than the skeletons, the sarcophagi contain only dust. If Kor is forced to retreat here and has sufficient time, he uses 2 full-action rounds to open each of the sarcophagi, sliding back each lid just enough to allow the skeletons to emerge.

Creatures (EL 2): Inside the sarcophagi rest five animated skeletons. They attack anyone or anything that violates the tomb, but it takes them a full-round action to emerge from their tombs.

Human Skeletons (5): CR 1/3; Medium-Size Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 1d12; hp 6 each; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +0 melee (1d4/1d4, claws); SQ undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

SQ—Undead: Skeletons are immune to cold-based attacks. They are not damaged by piercing weapons and take only half damage from slashing weapons. They are also immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

H2. Chute.

> The stone trapdoor underneath the statue opens to reveal a wide, unlit stone shaft leading down. Embedded in the left-hand wall at the top the chute are three iron hooks, spaced 1 foot apart in a perfect row.

A sheer, 30-foot-long chute leads down into the rest of the excavation. The chute descends at a 60-degree angle.

When Kor is present in the tunnels, a rope ladder is affixed to the two nearest hooks embedded in the chute wall. A knotted rope hangs from the third hook. When Kor is not present, a rope ladder hangs from the nearest two hooks; however, the third hook is not in use, and the knotted rope is missing. (Kor keeps the knotted rope hidden in the churchyard, beneath an old headstone.)

The PCs can safely descend the shaft using the knotted rope or any other rope secured to the third hook. The hooks supporting the rope ladder are part of a **Trap**.

Trap (EL 1/2): If a PC puts his weight on the rope ladder, the hooks supporting the ladder pop out, causing the ladder to fall and dropping the unfortunate PC down the chute for 1d6 points of damage. PCs who inspect the hooks closely and make a successful Search skill check (DC 10) learn that the hooks are designed to pull free of the wall when any significant weight is applied.

Chute Trap: CR 1/2; 20-ft.-long chute (1d6 points of damage); Search (DC 10); Disable Device (automatic once the trap is detected).

H3. Trapped Cavern.

> The rough-hewn room might have been some sort of base for the diggers who worked on the first section of the tunnel. The wood supports appear strong, but broken tools, bones, and other refuse lay scattered around the dirt floor. A tunnel leads away to the north.

This was the excavation's first "campsite." Before sending away his band of hired mercenaries, Kor had them dig two concealed pits in the floor at the entrances to this cave (as described under Trap below). Hidden in each pit are two zombies (see **Creatures** below). Although great pains were taken to hide the pits, PCs can avoid them altogether by following a faint trail of footprints leading to the north tunnel. Noticing the footprints requires a successful Spot skill check (DC 10).

Trap (EL 1/2 per pit): A successful Search skill check (DC 15) reveals the closest pit. (A separate roll is needed to find the second pit.) Their lids are made of wood (and sound hollow if anyone taps on them) but have dirt and mud covering their surfaces (to make them hard to find). The lids are in two pieces and swing down on hinges—the zombies have orders to push the pit doors back into place after they deal with "visitors."

The pits are easily circumvented once detected.

10-foot-deep Pits (2): CR 1/2; 1d6 points of damage; Reflex saving throw (DC 20) negates; Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 15).

Creatures (EL 1 per pit): Inside each pit wait two zombies, four total. Former prisoners who tried to escape, they attack anyone who falls into the pit.

Human Zombies (2 per pit, 4 total): CR 1/2; Medium-Size Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 2d12+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 16 each; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1/crit 19-20, slam); SQ undead, partial actions only; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feat: Toughness.

SQ—Undead: Zombies are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

SQ—Partial Actions Only (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but not both in the same round.

H4. Bookends. Four skeletons stand motionless behind thin screens of packed dirt on either side of this corridor, two per niche. Detecting these concealed niches requires a successful Search skill check (DC 15). Dwarves looking for unusual stonework receive a +4 racial bonus to the check. An elf who merely passes within 5 feet of the concealed niches is entitled to a Search check to spot them, but by then the trap might already be sprung (depending on the party's marching order).

Should any living creature other than Kor Bloodaxe pass between the concealed niches, the four skeletons break out of their hiding places and attack. Read the following to the players once the trap is detected or sprung:

> You hear a horrible scraping, and suddenly the walls on either side of you fall inward. Skeletal fingers reach out of the crumbled stone.

Creatures (EL 1): These skeletons are under Kor's control and have been ordered to behave in this manner.

Halfling Skeletons (4): CR 1/4; Small Undead (3 ft. tall); HD 1/2d12; hp 3 each; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +0 melee (1d3-1 [x2], claws); SQ undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

SQ—Undead: See area **H1** for details.

H5. Secret Door. If the PCs enter this area at night, read or paraphrase the following:

> Torch sconces—with lit torches placed in them—are embedded in the timber supports of this curved passage. The floor is made of uniformly set stone.

Should the PCs arrive during the day, add the following:

> The light from the torches reveals two humanoid figures standing at the bend in the passage. As you see them, the shadowy light reveals that they were once human. Slowly, their arms come up and a low moan escapes one as they move toward you in the near-darkness.

The humanoid figures are zombies. At night, Kor places the zombies in area **H10** to watch the workers in the tunnel.

Set into one wall is a secret door that is not well hidden; PCs who make a successful Search check (DC 10) find the door, while elf PCs are entitled to a check even if they are not actively searching the area for secret doors. The secret door is not locked and pivots easily on a central axis.

Creatures (EL 1): During the day, two human zombies (controlled by Kor Bloodaxe) lurk in this section of the corridor, protecting Kor's quarters. They attack anyone who enters the area other than the cleric. One zombie has the **Treasure**.

Human Zombies (2): hp 16 each; see area **H3** for complete statistics.

Treasure: One zombie (determined randomly) wears a black leather patch over its left eye. Hidden beneath the patch in its otherwise empty eye socket is a topaz gem (worth 500 gp).

H6. Kor's Quarters. The door to this room is locked, and Kor carries the only key.

Locked Wooden Door: 1-in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 18; Open Lock DC 20.

Read or paraphrase the following description once the PCs open the door and peer into the room beyond:

> Lantern light seems to deepen the shadows in this room. The stone table to the south has been converted into a makeshift altar. The rest of the room has a lived-in feeling—but not a homey, friendly feeling. Rather the dark air of secrecy and treachery pervades the room. A red, mud-stained rug covers the floor near the entrance. Against the far wall stands a bookcase, next to which sits a wooden chest. A wooden trapdoor is set into the floor against the north wall.

Although he sleeps in the Temple of Valor (during the day mostly), Kor visits this room often during the night. The large, red rug on the floor makes the room appear slightly more comfortable. The rug bears faded symbols of the god Heironeous and used to be a tapestry hanging in the Temple of Valor; now, Kor uses it to wipe his muddy feet. There is also a bookcase, a locked wooden chest (holding the **Treasure**, detailed below), and a wooden trapdoor in the floor. Kor carries the only key to the chest.

The bookcase holds several tomes glorifying Hextor, along with detailed notes concerning the excavation and the evils underneath the ruins. They confirm that several strange creatures—minor devils, undead, and even some dire animals—lay sleeping underneath the ruins of Castle Overlook, trapped by powerful magic. These tomes also state that the treasure of the evil army (brought to Castle Overlook as a war chest to pay off informers and mercenaries in the service of darkness) rests somewhere in the catacombs. These are the notes and letters that led Kor to the area in the first place.

Secured by a simple pin mechanism, the wooden trapdoor covers a 10-foot deep pit in the room's stone floor. Made of nothing more than packed dirt, the hole is dark, damp, and unpleasant—especially for the occupant. See the **Creature** section below for more information.

Treasure: Inside the locked wooden chest, Kor keeps items taken from travelers or looted from the Temple of Valor. One item of particular note is the stylized leather armor once worn by Lia Spellsong. Any friend of Lia's recognizes it immediately. It appears to be in good shape, even though there are blotches of mud on the sides and back. The armor is well made but nonmagical. In addition to the armor, the chest contains a sack of 180 gp, a 500-gp sapphire, an ornate blue crystal key (see "Concluding the Adventure" for details), an arcane scroll (*silent image*), a *potion of bull's strength* (bubbly red liquid), and several mundane items: three daggers, a light mace*, an empty backpack*, two flasks of water, a jar of ink*, two quills*, three musical compositions scrawled on rolled sheets of parchment*, four candles, an empty waterskin, a healer's kit, a wooden flute*, an empty pouch, and a set of thieves' tools. Items marked with an asterisk belong to Lia and Tory.

Locked Wooden Chest (Small): 1-in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 1; Break DC 17; Open Lock DC 20. Smashing open the chest shatters the *potion of bull's strength* and flasks of water within. The water dilutes the potion, making it unsalvageable.

Creature (EL 0): Trapped in the dirt pit beneath the trapdoor is Lia's husband, Tory. He's looked better, but he's delighted to be set free. If Lia has not already been found, he insists on searching for her. Tory also insists that any of Lia's belongings recovered from the chest (see above) be returned.

When Otis Benbough and his kobold allies captured Lia and Tory, they brought them to Kor. The priest of Hextor immediately recognized Lia as the more powerful of the two. Figuring he couldn't just leave them both in the general slave pit (area **H8**), he separated them, imprisoning Tory here. He told Lia he had her husband "safe," and that he would keep Tory until Lia helped finish the tunnel. Upset and angry, Lia recognized she had no real choice and has complied—so far. Kor has kept his word, to date. Tory has been fed regularly and kept alive for more than a week.

If freed, Tory can tell the PCs little about the complex, but he knows that he and Lia were captured by Otis Benbough and the kobolds and that "Arrias" is, in truth, an evil priest of Hextor. Kor has told Tory virtually all of his plans, seeing the miserable musician's defenseless position as an amusing chance to tell of his own brilliance.

Tory the Songsmith, male human Exp2 (composer): CR —; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 2d6; hp 8; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed); AL CG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +3, Craft (musical compositions) +6, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +3, Search +4, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +3, Spot +3, Swim +2. *Feats*: Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Development: If Kor's plans are discovered and he can flee to area **H6**, he takes Tory hostage. Should Kor believe he cannot escape on his own, he first tries to use Tory as a shield and then kills the composer if his demands aren't met.

H7. Kobold Den.

> The tunnel ends at a roughly hewn, 10-foot-high cul-de-sac. Debris, tattered rags, and other refuse litter the floor.

During the day, this room is occupied by kobolds (detailed under **Creatures** below). During the night, they are found in area **H10**. There is nothing else of interest here.

Creatures (EL 1): Six kobolds sleep here during the day, huddled together at the back of the room with their halfspears lying nearby. They are entitled to a Listen skill check to detect the party's approach; this roll is opposed by the characters' Move Silently skill checks.

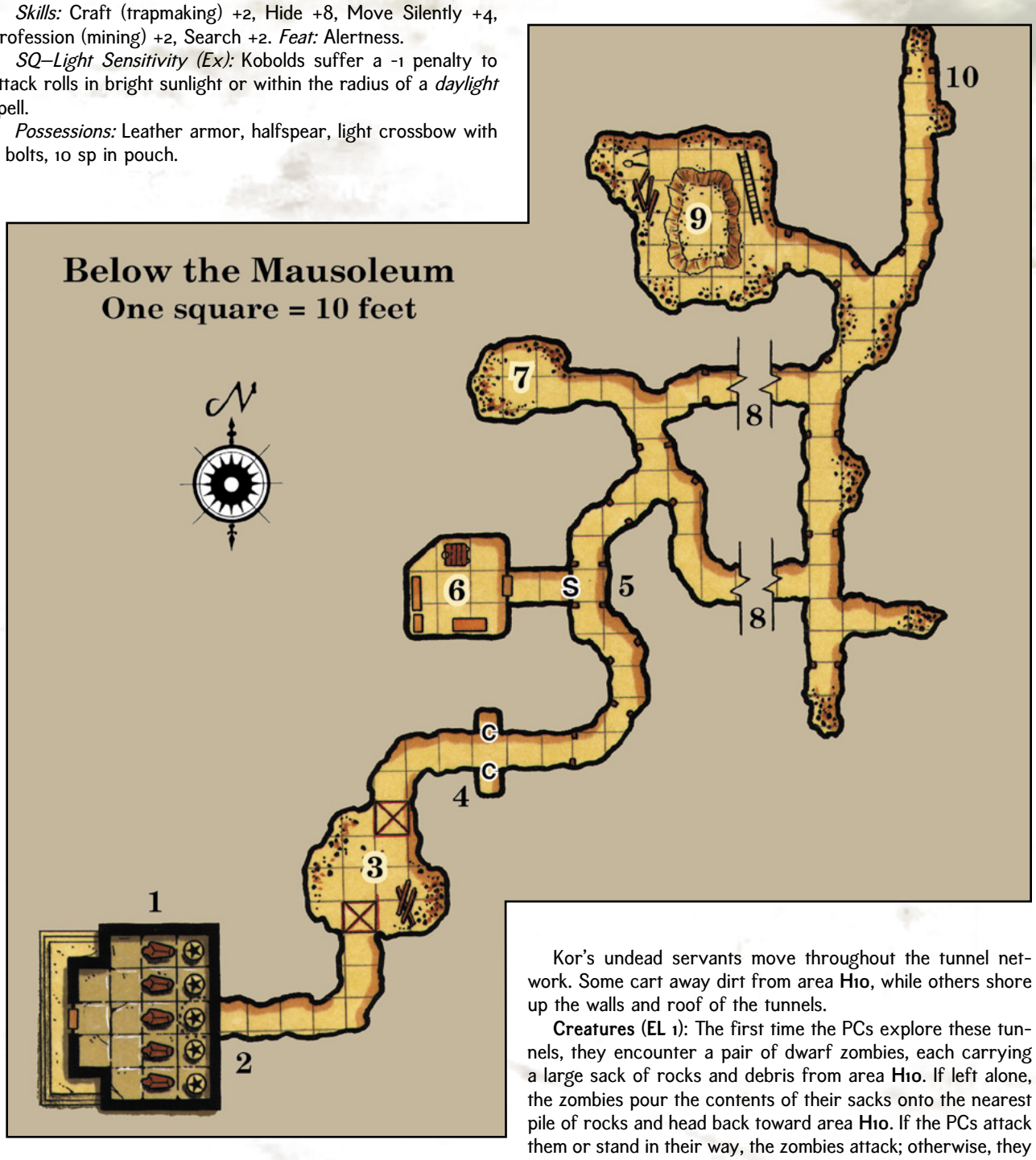
These kobolds are emissaries sent by Skliks Dogear. During the night, Kor keeps them busy watching the slaves in area **H9** or **H10**. These kobolds are cowardly, and PCs who make a successful Intimidate check (DC 10) cause the creatures to scatter and flee. If half of the kobolds are slain, the remaining ones surrender. They have no loyalty to Kor and, if caught, offer to lead their captors to the cleric in exchange for their freedom.

Kobolds (6): CR 1/6; Small Reptilian Humanoid (2 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1/2d8; hp 2 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +1 natural, +2 armor); Atk -1 melee (1d6-2, half-spear); or +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +2, Hide +8, Move Silently +4, Profession (mining) +2, Search +2. *Feat:* Alertness.

SQ—Light Sensitivity (Ex): Kobolds suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Possessions: Leather armor, halfspear, light crossbow with 4 bolts, 10 sp in pouch.



H8. Tunnel Network.

Timber pilings support the ceiling of this roughly hewn tunnel. There are signs of prior cave-ins, and here and there you see bones amid the dirt or embedded in the walls. Occasionally, the faint tapping of metal on rock can be heard in the distance.

The tunnel winds north and east toward the plateau and toward Kor Bloodaxe's goal—the catacombs riddling the plateau beneath Castle Overlook.

Kor's undead servants move throughout the tunnel network. Some cart away dirt from area **H10**, while others shore up the walls and roof of the tunnels.

Creatures (EL 1): The first time the PCs explore these tunnels, they encounter a pair of dwarf zombies, each carrying a large sack of rocks and debris from area **H10**. If left alone, the zombies pour the contents of their sacks onto the nearest pile of rocks and head back toward area **H10**. If the PCs attack them or stand in their way, the zombies attack; otherwise, they ignore the party.

Dwarf Zombies (2): hp 13 each; see area **H3** for complete statistics.

H9. The Slave Pit.

The stench of waste and decay fills this 15-foot-tall room. A huge pit dominates the center of the cave, while tools and rubbish lay scattered around the walls. A pair of torches have been embedded in the walls, one north of the pit and one south.

Five skeletons circle the pit. Occasionally, one jabs down into the darkness with a spear. Faint cries and moans answer back from the black hole. The skeletons somehow appear to derive satisfaction from these sounds—though that might just be your imagination.

This large room contains a huge pit Kor Bloodaxe uses to contain his slaves. Along the east wall lies a sturdy, 25-foot-long wooden ladder—just long enough to allow the slaves to climb out and work. The walls of the 20-foot-deep pit are made of wet clay and loosely packed earth; anyone falling into the pit suffers 2d6 points of damage, although monks and PCs with the Tumbling skill can reduce or negate this damage.

During the day, all twenty slaves are trapped in the pit, including Lia Spellsong. During the night, there are four commoners laying in the pit. One of them is feigning a twisted ankle, one is too weak to work (0 hit points), and the remaining two are dying (-1 to -9 hit points) and soon to be made into undead by Kor Bloodaxe. The rest of the slaves (including Lia Spellsong) are digging in area **H10**.

If he has not been defeated in a previous encounter, Kor is here. He is either tormenting the slaves with promises of turning them into zombies, or he is preparing to cast his *animate dead* spell on a slave who has recently died. (Since he must touch a corpse to animate it, Kor has climbed down into the pit. PCs who enter the room at this time see the ladder leaning up against the eastern wall of the pit. If the PCs catch him in the pit, Kor uses the living slaves as hostages to guarantee his freedom and escape.)

Finally, if Kor is present, he has already cast a *desecrate* spell upon the chamber. All Charisma checks made to turn the undead suffer a -3 unholy penalty, while undead within the chamber receive a +1 unholy bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws. Undead animated within the desecrated room gain +1 hit points per HD.

If Kor is not present and you want to make the encounter challenging for the characters (perhaps they've had too easy a time so far), consider adding three ogre skeletons that Kor animated from bones his kobold allies found in the Waste (area **E**). The ogre skeletons are hidden behind a layer of packed earth and mud against the south and west walls of the cavern. PCs searching the walls spot them with a successful Search skill check (DC 15). These skeletons erupt from the walls and attack if any of the prisoners are removed from the pit without Kor's permission.

Creatures (EL 2, +3 if Kor is present, +2 if ogre skeletons are present): Five skeletons stand guard in this room. All of them are under Kor's control, and each carries a longspear for poking slaves who attempt to climb out of the pit. They are emotionless watchers and utterly unable to understand—let alone fall for—any tricks the prisoners might play on them to win release.

Human Skeletons (5): hp 9 each; see area **H1** for complete statistics. These skeletons fight with longspears (1d8/crit ×3). If they are disarmed, they attack with their claws.

Ogre Skeletons (3): CR 1; Large-Size Undead (9 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 15 each; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6+2/1d6+2, claws); Reach 10 ft.; SQ undead; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

SQ—Undead: Skeletons are immune to cold-based attacks. They are not damaged by piercing weapons and take only half damage from slashing weapons. They are also immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

One prisoner has not given up hope of escape. The bard, Lia Spellsong, spends her days here, harboring her strength and hoping for an opportunity to break out and rescue her husband. In combat against Kor, Lia uses her singing to inspire courage among the PCs; see the bard class description in Chapter 3: Classes in the *Player's Handbook* for details. She casts her *daze* spell on Kor at the first opportunity.

Lia Spellsong, Female Human Brd2: CR —; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 2d6; hp 10; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d3-1 subdual, unarmed); SQ bardic music, spells; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 9, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +6, Listen +3, Perform +6, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +5. *Feats*: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative.

Spells (3): 0—*dancing lights, daze, ghost sound.*

Slaves, Male and Female Human Com1 (19 during the day, 4 at night): CR 0; Medium-Size Humanoid; HD 1d4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3-1 subdual, unarmed); AL CG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 10 (8 currently), Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +2 (+1 currently), Profession (varies) +3, Ride +1, Swim +2 (+1 currently). *Feats*: Skill Focus (varies).

H10. Excavation Site. During the day, this tunnel is empty save for several piles of rocks and debris. The two dwarf zombies from area **H8** come here periodically; after taking several rounds to fill their sacks with rocks, they leave for area **H8**, attacking only if they are disturbed or commanded by Kor.

During the night, sixteen slaves (including Lia Spellsong) are here, excavating the north tunnel, clearing rocks, and shoring up the ceiling. They are supervised by six kobolds armed with halfspears. (The kobolds' statistics are given in area **H7**.) The kobolds like to bark orders and poke the slaves with their spears. However, they otherwise behave exactly as described in area **H7**.

Concluding the Adventure

To keep Kor Bloodaxe from finishing his tunnel and releasing whatever evil lies beneath the castle, the PCs must destroy him or drive him away from Brookhollow. Freeing Kor's slaves, revealing his duplicity to the townsfolk, battling the kobolds of the Gnollwood—all these are ways to make Kor's plan more difficult, but he is only a few weeks away from breaking through into the catacombs. If the PCs do not defeat him personally (which probably means entering the underground complex, since Kor avoids confrontations above ground), he instructs his undead guards and kobold servitors to beat the slaves to death in an effort to accelerate excavation.

If the PCs defeat Kor, they might find other challenges in and around Brookhollow. Driving the kobolds out of the Gnollwood is a difficult task—there are other leaders besides

Skliks Dogear among them. Hunting down and destroying the last of Kor's undead creations in the Waste to the east might be worthwhile as well—the people of Brookhollow would be grateful to have that threat removed.

Inside a locked chest in area **H6**, the PCs might find a blue crystal key. This item has no use in this adventure but serves the PCs well in "Playing with Fire," another adventure appearing in this issue. If you have no wish to run these adventures back to back, feel free to give the blue crystal key some other purpose or significance in your home campaign.

Finally, there is the evil beneath Castle Overlook. It hasn't been destroyed—just kept at bay. Notes in Kor Bloodaxe's secret chamber (area **H6**) indicate that there are more evil creatures to fight and a treasure to be won if PCs are willing to continue digging beneath the plateau. The notes indicate that the least powerful creatures were trapped near the bottom of the catacombs (toward where Kor was digging), since the more powerful ones were the closest to breaking out when the marble seal was put in place. (See area **F** for more details on the marble slab.) Finally, what does the marble slab cover? No one in or around Brookhollow knows, but legends tell that demons, devils, and greater undead were trapped with their lesser servants below Castle Overlook. Some say there are more seals within the catacombs, keeping the most powerful creatures in the most powerful prisons—but who knows how many of these evils from the past roam free beneath Overlook, with only a thin wall of earth and enchanted marble keeping them at bay?

Ed Stark is the Creative Director for the D&D core line, which includes the new 3rd-Edition Player's Handbook *(released this month). This is Ed's first published adventure in* Dungeon Magazine.

Encounter Level Chart

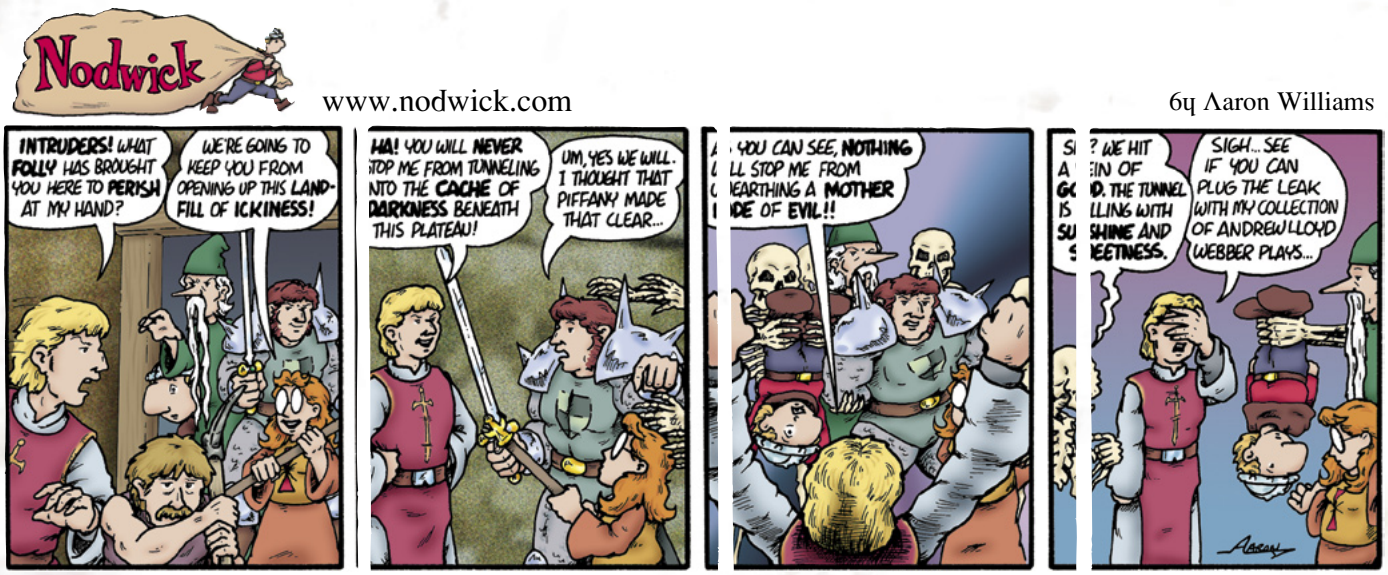
Any encounter involving creatures or traps has an Encounter Level (EL), An EL value gives the DM an idea of how challenging the encounter is. If the encounter involves one creature or trap, the EL is the same as the creature's or trap's Challenge Rating (CR). For encounters with multiple creatures and/or traps, the EL can be much higher.

If the EL is lower than the party level, the encounter is relatively easy. If the EL is equal to the party level, the encounter is moderately challenging. If the EL is higher than the party level, the encounter is tough and potentially deadly to the PCs if they are unwise or unlucky.

Summarized below are the ELs for all of the encounters in this adventure:

Area	Encounter Description	EL
A	Otis Benbough, Halfling Rog3	3
	with 6 Kobolds	+2
	with 4 Rogues	+2
*	4 Wolves	4
*	1 Boar	2
G	Kor Bloodaxe, Human Clr5	5
H1	5 Human Skeletons	2
H2	Chute Trap	1/2
H3	2 10-foot-deep Pits	1
	4 Human Zombies	2
H4	4 Halfling Skeletons	1
H5	2 Human Zombies	1
H7	6 Kobolds	1
H8	2 Dwarf Zombies	1
H9	5 Human Skeletons	2
	with Kor Bloodaxe	+5
	with 3 Ogre Skeletons	+3

* These are random encounters.


Nodwick
www.nodwick.com
by Aaron Williams
INTRUDERS! WHAT FOLLY HAS BROUGHT YOU HERE TO PERISH AT MY HAND?
WE'RE GOING TO KEEP YOU FROM OPENING UP THIS LANDFILL OF ICKINESS!
HA! YOU WILL NEVER STOP ME FROM TUNNELING INTO THE CACHE OF DARKNESS BENEATH THIS PLATEAU!
UM, YES WE WILL. I THOUGHT THAT PIFFANY MADE THAT CLEAR...
YOU CAN SEE, NOTHING LL STOP ME FROM EARTHING A MOTHER DE OF EVIL!!
? WE HIT IN OF D. THE TUNNEL LLING WITH SHINE AND EETNESS.
SIGH... SEE IF YOU CAN PLUG THE LEAK WITH MY COLLECTION OF ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER PLAYS...

Playing with Fire

Don't Get Burned!

by Jeff Grubb

artwork by John A. Garner, cartography by Diesel

"Playing with Fire" is a D&D adventure designed for four 2nd-level player characters. Characters who survive the entire adventure should amass enough experience points to advance half way to 3rd level. If the party contains more than four characters, individual PCs will earn fewer XPs and thus might not obtain enough experience to advance as far. Although set in the GREYHAWK campaign setting, this adventure can be transported easily into your own campaign. The adventure can also be modified for characters of levels 1-8, as described in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar.

Adventure Summary

This adventure takes place in and around the long-sealed hideout of an evil group of cultist bandits. The cult was sealed in years ago, and the area has not been disturbed since, but the heroes have a key that will let them get by the original barrier and enter the (now-assumed) tomb of the bandit leader and his followers.

The area near the cult's hideout includes a walled roadside inn, which has over the years made its own contribution to the legend of the cult.

Adventure Background

Little more than a decade ago, the region in which this adventure occurs was subjected to a relentless assault by a group of bandits known as the Brigands of the Flame, under the leadership of a mysterious warrior known only as the Fire Lord. The brigands numbered some two hundred and roved throughout the countryside, looting and putting to the torch that which they could not immediately haul away. The Fire Lord was described as a knight in coal-black armor, and some believed that he was in league with foul, forgotten gods and infernal spirits. Indeed, the survivors told stories about flaming elementals fighting alongside the Fire Lord's raiders.

The depredations of the Brigands brought them to the attention of individuals of a more benevolent nature—adventurers who challenged the bandits and slew many, driving the remainder, including their leader, to their hideout near the Lippenfalls. The heroes pursued the bandits into their vaulted halls but were repulsed after initial successes by fiery creatures summoned to fight on the Fire Lord's behalf. The wizardly leader of the adventurers, Rax, cast a spell from an eldritch scroll that sealed the entrance and created a matching key, which he took with him. The fire-worshiping bandits troubled the area no more, and Rax and his fellows left for greater adventures.

Within the hideout, the Fire Lord and his bandit-cultists were trapped, along with a group of sightless grimlock slaves and several azers, natives of the elemental planes. The Fire Lord, holding control over his followers, convinced them to put themselves into a slumber while he sought a method to circumvent Rax's barrier. The potion was actually poison, though the Fire Lord did intend to eventully administer the antidote.

He never had the chance. The Fire Lord took ill himself and chose the same method of poison (which kept the body fresh) he had administered to his followers. He had his azers wall him in, with the hopes that the azers would continue his work and eventually restore him to life.

The azers did not. Instead they turned toward their own interests. They kept the grimlocks as slaves until the sightless creatures rebelled, then sealed them off in the rooms that had been set aside for the now-dead (but still-fresh) bodies of the cult members. The azers desire nothing more than to return home, to the Elemental Plane of Fire. Meanwhile, the grimlocks have consumed the remaining bodies and finally accomplished what the Fire Lord had hoped—tunneled to the outside world.

Five years ago, a dwarven fighter named Winterbok appeared in the area, claiming to have been one of the original heroes in Rax's party. Winterbok carried a black shield that he stated had been taken from the Fire Lord. It was his intention to break into the sealed hideout and loot it, since its inhabitants were likely dead. He instead died at the inn, and his dark shield is now a curiosity there—the source of new legends.

Setting the Hook

In an earlier adventure, the heroes find a key made of blue crystal. They might find this key amid random treasure or as part of a hoard discovered at the end of an previous adventure, such as among the belongings of Kor Bloodaxe, the evil priest from "Evil Unearthed." A *detect magic* spell cast on the key reveals a strong Transmutation magic. An *identify* spell

Scaling the Adventure

Although this adventure is designed for 2nd-level PCs, the module can be modified for lower or higher level parties by increasing the number of opponents and making the main villains tougher.

1st-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but remember that the PCs are likely to deplete more of their resources and will probably need more healing and rest between encounters.

3rd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written. If the PCs are having too easy a time, give the azers a leader (Jazindur). If the PCs are still underchallenged, add two small fire elementals to area 12.

Jazindur, Male Azer Sor2: CR 3; Medium Outsider (4 ft. tall); HD 2d8+2 (azer) plus 2d4+2 (Sor); hp 17; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 21 (+6 natural, +4 *mage armor*, +1 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1, warhammer); SA heat; SQ fire defenses; SR 13; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +5. Will +7; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Spells (6/5, chosen from the following list): 0—*daze, detect magic, flare, heat ray* (similar to the *ray of frost* spell except it deals fire damage); 1st—*mage armor, sleep.*

Skills: Craft (metalworks) +6, Climb +4, Concentration +6, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Listen +4, Search +4, Spellcraft +6, Spot +5. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

SA—Heat (Ex): See area 8.

SQ—Fire Defenses (Ex): See area 8.

Possessions: Warhammer, *wand of burning hands* (12 charges). Jazin's wand creates an effect identical to the *burning hands* spell. The fire deals 3d4 points of damage, or half if a Reflex saving throw (DC 12) succeeds.

Small Fire Elemental (1): CR 1; Small Elemental (Fire) (4 ft. tall); HD 2d8; hp 9; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft; AC 15 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d4, slam + 1d4, burn); SA burn; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (slam).

SA—Burn (Ex): Those hit by the elemental's slam attack must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 11) or catch fire. The flame burns 1d4 rounds and inflicts 1d6 points of damage per round. A burning creature can take a move-equivalent action to put out the flame.

4th-level PCs: Make the two additions noted above. If the PCs are having too easy a time, consider adding a grimlock leader, Gurge, who is also a 2nd-level barbarian.

Gurge, Male Grimlock Bbn2: CR 3; Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d8+6 (grimlock) plus 2d12+6 (Bbn); hp 43; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +6 melee (1d12+4/crit ×3, greataxe); SA blindsight, rage once/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (see area 12); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4. Will +2; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +6 (+16 underground), Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +4. *Feat:* Alertness.

SA—Rage (Ex): Consult Chapter 3: Classes in the *Player's Handbook* for details.

SQ—Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Gurge retains his Dexterity bonus to AC even if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

5th- to 6th-level PCs: Add Jazindur and give each of the other azers one or two fighter levels. Add Gurge and equip all of the other grimlocks with greataxes. Make Gurge's greataxe a +1 weapon.

7th- to 8th-level PCs: Implement all of the above changes, but make the two extra elementals Medium-size; see area 12 for complete stats. If the PCs are thrashing the azers and grimlocks, consider making Jazindur and Gurge higher level. Perhaps the Fire Lord comes to life (see area 11 and the "Let's Raise the Fire Lord!" sidebar for details) if the PCs try to remove his magic bastard sword from the treasury (area 12).

The treasure in this adventure consists mainly of three magic items: the Fire Lord's *+1 flaming bastard sword*, Winterbok's shield (a *+1 shield*), and a *minor ring of elemental resistance (fire).* This is more treasure than is normally found in a 2nd-level adventure. (The ring alone is worth 16,000 gp.) However, PCs might not claim the shield, and there's a chance they'll be forced to relinquish the magic ring. Excluding the shield and ring, this adventure has roughly 10,000 gp worth of treasure. To determine the appropriate amount of treasure for PCs of higher or lower level, multiply 5,000 gp by the party's starting level.

indicates that this key was made to open a specific magical door. A *legend lore* spell provides the following information: "The key opens the door to fire, sealed by Rax a decade ago. Go to the land that was once a pyre, to find the lock in the blue door." Armed with this information and asking about, the PCs soon find out the story of the fire-worshiping Brigands of the Flame and their black-armored Fire Lord. Bards can use their bardic knowledge ability to recall the origin and purpose of the key, but this knowledge is considered obscure, and the check is made against DC 25. A bard can not take 10 or take 20 on this roll.

Those without magic or bardic knowledge might be able to find a sage who would identify the key, as well as give the exact location of the once-secret lair of the Fire Lord.

The Lippen Valley

The Lippen is a spritely stream that flows out of the mountains at the Lippenfalls and burbles down to larger, more important, and well-known flows. A trail route, used by minor merchants and peddlers, travels with the stream up to the falls, then heads west. The hideout of the Brigands of the Flame can be found farther to the east, across the stream.

Those traveling up the stream are struck by the wildness of the region: Briar bushes line the sides of the road, and tangles of vine maples twist over the blackened stumps. Toppled nurse logs serve as beds for new trees. If it is spring and summer, the air is thick with gnats. In the fall and winter months, the ground cover is only slightly less verdant.

Rangers, druids, and individuals who make a successful Spot check (DC 5) notice that the older trees are scorched and most are deadfalls. Many have toppled, and the vine maples twist over their blackened stumps. The Brigands of the Flame put this area to the torch during their raids a number of times, and only now, a decade later, is the area healing.

The only building of importance in the area is the Osterhaus, a walled inn situated about a half-mile downstream from the falls. The building is only about seven years old—the original on this site was an early target of the Brigands of the Flame—but it is unremarkable, similar to a hundred other such inns situated along trade routes throughout the land.

The Osterhaus Inn

The Osterhaus provides a few basic amenities to the traveler: warm food, a roof to shield one from the rain, and walls to protect the wanderer from the night. It is a single structure to the west of the road, about a half-mile from the falls, and cannot be missed by riders. The PCs should reach it in late afternoon.

The inn has a permanent staff of three: Old Jarl, his young wife Maggie, and Toby the stable boy. Jarl rebuilt the inn and is a large, hearty man who makes a good business off of the merchant trade and the occasional adventurer. His wife Maggie is about half his age, and they have been married about three years. She thinks the world of her husband and cooks for the inn. Toby is a young man, only a few years younger than the adventurers themselves, and claims to be one of Maggie's cousins. Neither Maggie nor Toby was present when Winterbok the dwarf met his untimely end, and they know of the tale only as Old Jarl has told it.

The inn consists of a two-story building built into palisade wall made of upended logs. There are no windows on the first floor that face outside the palisade, but there are ones within the inn itself. A solid wooden gate is left open during the day, and it is closed at night.

If the characters avail themselves of the inn, Old Jarl greets them at the door and instructs Toby to take their mounts (if they have any). Jarl and Maggie serve supper and breakfast, have a common sleeping area upstairs, and a private room for a bit more money should anyone be uncomfortable about such arrangements. As the PCs settle down in the common room for dinner, point out the shield when describing the room.

Over dinner, Old Jarl is more than willing to share the tale of Winterbok. (See "Old Jarl's Tales" below.)

1. Courtyard. This is a hard-packed earth area just beyond the gates. The double doors are secured at night.

Locked Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 23.

2. Stable. This small stable can hold six horses. If the PCs have more mounts, they are kept out in the courtyard.

3. Tack Room/Toby's Quarters. This room contains harnesses and tack belonging to visiting guests and also serves as Toby's sleeping quarters.

4. Common Room. This large room has a fireplace dominating one wall. There are a number of long tables surrounded by simple wooden chairs. Winterbok's black shield hangs above the fireplace.

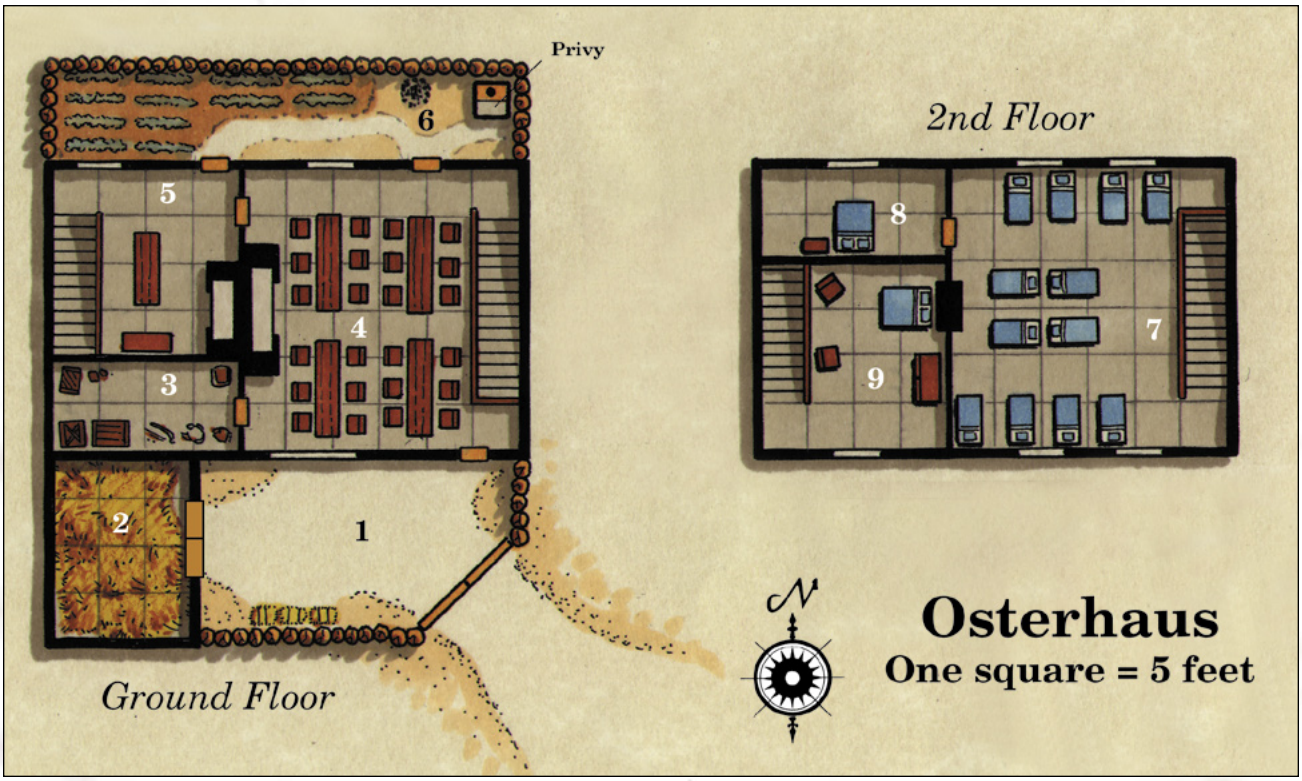
5. Kitchen. This room is used for food preparation. Ale and other perishables are kept in an unlocked storage room under the stairs.

6. Garden. Maggie maintains a vegetable and spice garden here. There is also a firepit (used to heat water for the kitchen) and a small privy in one corner.

7. Common Sleeping Quarters. The sleeping quarters are communal. There are a dozen bunks in this room, and if there are more guests present, they can sleep on the floor or double up. Guests are responsible for their own possessions.

8. Private Room. This is a locked room (Jarl keeps the key) that Jarl will rent out for 1 sp a night. There is a single double bed within.

9. Master Bedroom. This is Jarl and Maggie's room and holds a double bed, two chairs, and a dresser.



Winterbok's Shield

The shield hanging over the fireplace has been named (by Old Jarl) after the dwarven warrior who brought it to him. Its true name is the *shield of flame's return*. It appears as a small steel shield with the design of a stylized flame etched into its front. The front of the shield has been tinted black and the flame-etching filled with yellow paint.

An *identify* spell reveals that it is a *+1 shield* with an additional, undetermined power. This special ability is usable by creatures native to the Elemental Plane of Fire. Such creatures touching or striking the shield must make a Will saving throw (DC 10) or be sent back to their native plane. The shield affects only natives to the Elemental Plane of Fire in this fashion, and creatures willing to return (such as the azers) do not need to make the saving throw to be affected.

The shield hangs over the mantle of the Osterhaus's common room hearth, on a simple hook. To date, the legend of the "cursed shield" has been sufficient to keep individuals from pinching it.

Running the Inn

As the DM, play with the inn as much as you think your players will bear. If they are a group of gung-ho monster fighters, just treat the inn as a place to stay. Give them the description of the common room, and if they don't bite on the shield, let it go at that.

The inn is empty at the moment, save for Jarl, Maggie, Toby, and the adventurers. Should you want to seed a future adventure, say a chance meeting with a merchant who might prove interesting later in your campaign, here is the place to do it. Anyone so encountered should be friendly, heading the other direction, uninterested in the Brigands of the Flame, and leaving the next morning, very early.

The inn serves as a base of operations and a place to gather information, creating a (perhaps false) sense of security for the heroes. Should they allow the azers to escape from the Fire Lord's lair, the heroes will discover that their actions have consequences beyond their intent.

Creatures (EL 0): Have fun playing Old Jarl, Maggie, and Toby. Don't be afraid to give them personality and colorful character traits. Toby in particular wants to be an adventurer, latches onto one character, and asks all sorts of questions about the party's heroics.

Old Jarl, Male Human Com3 (innkeeper): CR –; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d4+3; hp 11; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d4+2/crit 19-20, dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Listen +2, Profession (innkeeping) +7, Ride +4, Spot +3. *Feats:* Simple Weapon Proficiency, Skill Focus–Profession (innkeeping), Skill Focus (Ride).

Maggie, Female Human Com1 (cook): CR –; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk -4 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Craft (weaving) +3, Listen +3, Profession (cook) +5, Spot +3. *Feats:* Iron Will, Skill Focus–Profession (cook).

Toby, Male Human Com1 (stablehand): CR –; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12.

Skills: Handle Animal +3, Ride +4, Rope Use +2. *Feats:* Simple Weapon Proficiency, Skill Focus (Ride).

Old Jarl's Tales

Jarl knows the history of the region as indicated in the "Adventure Background," up to the point where the Brigands of the Flame were sealed in. Jarl arrived here seven years ago and, as such, avoided the depredations of the raiders. However, he will recount the following:

> "This whole area was once black with ash, and the stream ran gray and muddy for two summers after I got here. All that was left of this area was the foundation and blackened timbers. I built all of this with my own hands, and made it a thriving business."

Should the heroes express an interest in the shield on the wall, Jarl smiles and shares the following information:

> "Aye, there's a tale to that. Cursed, that shield is. Any who touch it feel the Curse of Rax.
>
> "I learned the full story of the Brigands of the Flame from a dwarf named Winterbok, who claimed he was with the party led by Rax that drove the brigands back into their lair. Winterbok and the others followed them beneath the earth, but they were driven back. Rax sealed the entrance with an old spell and left the brigands to starve within. Winterbok came back years later, figuring to break back in and find what the dead men were guarding.
>
> "Winterbok had this shield with him, which he claimed he picked up the first time they invaded the brigands' hideout. Said he took it from the Fire Lord himself. He never got a chance to use it. He stepped out of my inn and didn't get more than five steps before he keeled over, deader than a doornail. Never saw anything like it.

"My first stable boy, Mikey, brought it in and hung it over the wall. Sure enough, two days later he keeled over, deader than a doornail. So that's when I was convinced it was cursed. So I leave it there, and I've got a challenge. It costs you a silver piece to touch it, but if you do, and live through the night, I'll give you a free breakfast!"

Jarl's memory is conveniently clouded, and while he's telling the truth, it's not the entire truth. Yes, Winterbok claimed the shield came from the Fire Lord's Lair. But the dwarf got roaring drunk that night, fell off his seat, and cracked his head against the stone hearth. The late stable boy, Mikey, did die, but not until two months later, when he was run down by a horse. Jarl has told this tale so many times (and collected so many silver pieces from those seeking to touch the shield) that he believes it himself. Jarl gladly charges any of the PCs who are up to his challenge. He would hate to lose the shield, though, since it is a nice money-maker. He will not be argued out of it, but he will sell it if offered at least 2,000 gp (or items of similar value). He can be threatened and backs down if live steel is drawn (though he asks those who do to leave his establishment). Whether the heroes take the shield or not might affect the future of the Osterhaus Inn.

In addition to his tale of the shield, Jarl can tell the characters about the local animal life (wild dogs, bears, and the occasional wild pig) and the exact location of the entrance to the lair ("Go right at the falls—most of the trail is overgrown, but you can't miss it. It's sealed up with blue bricks!") Maggie has heard scavenging grimlocks moving around outside the inn at night, but Jarl dismisses that as nervousness on her part.

The Fire Lord's Lair

The road from the Osterhaus continues up about a half mile up alongside the streambed then reaches the Lippenfalls. The pool of the falls is emerald green from mineral deposits, and the water itself is warm from underground hotspots. The road turns to the west here, but Old Jarl's directions indicate that the PCs should cross at the base of the pool and travel alongside the rising hills to the east.

The trail is thickly overgrown with vines and creepers. A single-file line of adventurers can force their way through it. It is too thick to bring horses, though they can be tethered at the pool or left at the Osterhaus.

1. The Blue Door. Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs when they reach the brigands' hideout:

You arrive at the entrance of what was once a cavern dug into the mountainside. Once there were wooden double-gated doors to this entrance, but they have been ripped from their hinges, and now molder beneath the vines and mushrooms near the entrance. The opening is sealed with what looks like blue-glazed blocks of stone. There seems to be no door handle or hinges, but there is a keyhole in the center of the wall.

The blue-glazed bricks are unbreakable, the result of Rax's eldritch spell. Careful examination shows a number of light scratch marks (the results of previous attempts to break into the Fire Lord's lair) but no gouges or other cuts. The door is impervious to all physical attacks, as well as spells of less than

Roughing It

The PCs are not required to accept the hospitality of the Osterhaus. PCs who decide to sleep under the stars should be allowed to (and might have to, if the inn is destroyed), but roll 1d10 once per evening to see if there is an encounter. Do not roll for random encounters during the day.

Roll	Encounter
1-5	No Encounter
6	Harmless Snake (EL 0)
7-8	Wild Dogs (EL 1)
9	Black Bear (EL 2)
10	Grimlocks (EL 2)

Harmless Snake: CR –; Tiny Animal (2 ft. long); HD 1/4d8; hp 2; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Atk none; Face 2 1/2 ft. × 2 1/2 ft.; Reach 0; AL N; SV Fort +3 Ref +5; Will +1; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +14, Hide +19, Listen +9, Spot +9.

Select one PC (or roll randomly). That character finds a harmless black and yellow snake in her bedroll in the middle of the night. The snake cannot hurt the PCs and seeks only to escape.

Wild Dogs (3): CR 1/3; Small Animal (2 ft. tall); HD 1d8+2; hp 6 each; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, bite); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +5; Will +1; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5.

Black Bear (1): CR 2; Large Animal (8 ft. tall); HD 3d8+6; hp 19; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +6/+6 melee (1d4+4 [×2], claws), +1 melee (1d6+2, bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5. Ref +4. Will +2; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +8.

SQ–Scent (Ex): The bear can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponents are upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

Grimlocks (2): CR 1; Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV-Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +6, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +3. *Feat:* Alertness.

SA–Blindsight (Ex): Grimlocks suffer no penalties in melee combat and can detect all foes within 40 feet as a sighted creature would. Beyond that range they treat all targets as totally concealed. (See "Combat Modifiers" in Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH.*) Grimlocks are susceptible to sound- and scent-based attacks and are affected normally by loud noises and sonic spells (for example, *ghost sound* or *silence*) and overpowering odors (such as stinking cloud or incense-heavy air). Negating a grimlock's sense of smell or hearing reduces its Blind-Fight ability (as the feat). If both are so affected, the grimlock is effectively blind.

SQ–Immunities: Grimlocks are immune to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight.

SQ–Scent (Ex): The grimlocks can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponents are upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

6th level. If a *detect magic* spell is cast, the door radiates a strong Transformation aura, similar to the key that unlocks it.

When the characters place the blue crystal key into the lock, read or paraphrase the following:

> The key slides into the lock with an audible click, and a hairline crack radiates from the lock upward and downward. The wall of blue-glazed brick splits into two halves and swings slightly outward, creaking as if on ancient hinges. A puff of air, warm and smelling of minerals, wafts out through the open door.

The doors swing easily open to reveal a short tunnel leading into the mountainside. The PCs can lock the doors again using the key, if they so wish. Mention that as long as the doors are unlocked, they swing easily back and forth. They can only be secured by the key again. (The PCs might choose to do this, effectively locking themselves in. So long as they have the key, however, they can get out.)

Find out if the PCs are leaving the door open, closing it (though still leaving it unlocked), or locking it.

As the PCs move deeper into the Fire Lord's lair, the temperature increases. Area **2** is slightly warmer, area **5** causes sweating, and by the time the PCs reach area **11**, everyone will be uncomfortably hot.

2. Halls of the Fire Lord. As the PCs move down the tunnel from the entrance, read or paraphrase the following:

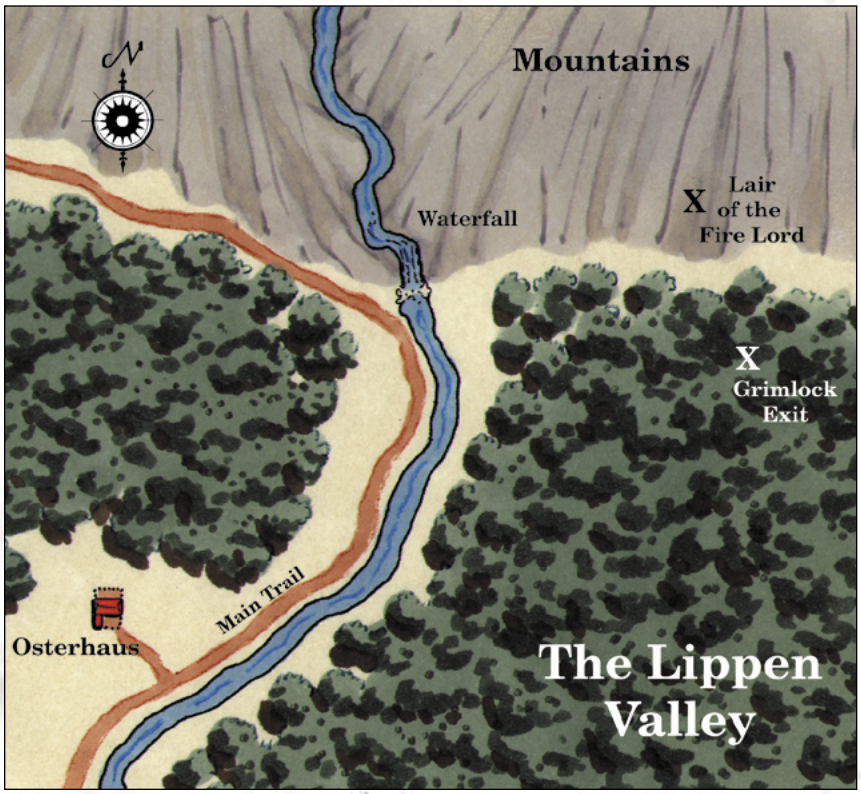
> The tunnel opens into a large, circular, domed room. The walls were once decorated with plaster frescoes, but they have been scorched beyond recognition and covered by a thick layer of soot. The center of the room is a great firepit, filled almost to overflowing with cinders and long-dead coals. A wide walkway stretches around the firepit. There are doorways to the left, right, and across the pit, each revealing a broad-stepped staircase.
>
> The staircases to the left and right descend into darkness, while the one directly across leads upward.

This was the entrance and marshalling area of the Fire Lord's troops. The walls were once decorated with their holy symbols. After the cultists were sealed in, they used this room for brewing and preparing their poison. Wiping aside most of the soot from a location reveals the holy symbol of this cult: a fiendish devil's head with batlike wings mounted to the sides.

The ashpit is filled with debris: the remains of ancient books, scrolls, tables legs, and chairs that have all been fed into the fire. Nothing is recoverable from the fire; all the pages and print have burned, and those fragments of furniture that remain are useless. A successful Spot check (DC 10) reveals the shards of a large number of clay crocks, marked with the winged demon skull symbol. These were crocks containing the poison antidote, destroyed by the azers.

3. Melted Armory.

> This small, circular room has a flat ceiling 10 feet high. The room looks like it has been stripped bare. Holes bored into the rock ring the room, as if they once supported racks, but there is no sign of the racks themselves. The floor is splattered with dull, metallic globs.
>
> Along the north wall, near the floor, is a 2-foot-diameter tunnel barely wide enough for a human.



This room was once the Brigands' armory, and the holes along its perimeter held metal racks for swords, shields, and armor. All of these have been taken by the azers, melted down, and hauled off to area **4**. There is nothing of value in the room.

The tunnel between areas **3** and **4** was carved by grimlock slaves of the azers, enforcing the hatred between the two surviving groups. It can be navigated only in single file, and only Small creatures (like gnomes and halflings) can navigate it easily. Medium-size creatures must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or become stuck, requiring 1d4+1 rounds to dislodge themselves. A new saving throw is required each time someone passes through here. A trapped PC who makes a successful Escape Artist skill check (DC 10) can free herself in 1 round instead of 1d4+1 rounds. Large or bigger creatures cannot fit through the tunnel.

The tunnel is a bit tight and claustrophobic, but safe. Cruel DMs can inform the players that as their heroes move through, bits of the ceiling rain down

The Azers Afoot

The azers in area 4 will be aware of the characters' presence once they enter the Fire Lord's lair; if nothing else, the sudden gout of cold, fresh air tells them there are visitors present. The azers do not seek to fight unless they feel they have to (or the heroes have the shield), but instead attempt to circle around the party and escape the Fire Lord's lair. If the characters enter area 3, the azers move through area 5. If the characters move to area 5, the azers head to the exit through area 3. If the PCs pass through the bell-trap in area 6, the azers attempt to sneak out behind the PCs.

The azers try to escape only if the Winterbok's Shield is at the Osterhaus. They feel the call of this device and know where it is. If the heroes are bearing Winterbok's Shield, the azers ambush the party to recover their device, staging their ambush in area 4. Otherwise, after the PCs enter areas 3, 5, or 6 for the first time, read the following aloud:

> You suddenly hear, behind you, the scuffling of many feet. Then you hear a door swinging open on ancient hinges, then silence.

When the heroes return to area 2, they find nothing has changed. If they check area 1, they find the door open (though they might have left it that way). If they go so far as to check outside, a successful Search skill check (DC 15) reveals numerous very fresh tracks, going back the way the party came. A successful Spot skill check (DC 10) reveals that the vegetation is slightly scorched along the trail now.

If the heroes had locked the door, the azers return to their lair in area 4 to set up the ambush and take the crystal key from the heroes. The key does not call out to them as the shield does, so they attempt to kill everyone and then loot the bodies.

Should the azers escape and the heroes follow them, the azers attempt to burn the Osterhaus down in an attempt to get the shield. Should the heroes immediately follow the azers, they catch up with them as the elemental creatures attempt to torch the inn. Azers move at a base speed of 30 feet per round (120 feet when running). Characters with a base speed greater than 30 feet per round might reach the azers sooner, at your discretion. The azers defend themselves if attacked.

Should the PCs fail or decline to follow the azers on their raid, the next time they return to the inn they will find it burned to the ground. See the section "Back To the Inn" for details.

around them (particularly if they get stuck), but this tunnel (and the others in the complex) is in no danger of collapse.

4. Azers' Haven.

This large circular room is filled with metallic trees. These trees stand about 6 feet high, with ornate, steel-gray trunks and branches covered with delicate metal foliage. The trees rest in heavy metal pots, again ornately formed. In the center of the room is a circular hearth that fills the room with a warm glow.

This is the lair of the five summoned azers, who have spent the past decade forming the treasure from area 3 into these ornate creations. The room contains a dozen metal trees. Each tree weighs 800 pounds and is made of reforged and remixed steel and miscellaneous metals.

If the heroes have left the front entrance open, the azers are not present, as they have escaped to recover Winterbok's shield (located in the Osterhaus). If the PCs have sealed the doors or carry Winterbok's Shield, the azers are in this room.

The metal foliage of the room acts as one-quarter cover for the azers, affording them a +2 bonus to AC and a +1 bonus to Reflex saving throws. The characters do not gain similar benefits, as the azers are skilled at navigating through the trees and firing through the gaps between the metal branches.

Creatures (EL 3, 6 if the PCs must battle the azers): The azers want to regain Winterbok's shield and leave as a group. Should that prove impossible, they try to attack the shield-bearer (if possible), making a touch attack against the shield itself. Such an attack inflicts no damage to the shield-bearer, but if successful, causes the attacking azer to disappear (sending it back to its home plane). Azers speak Ignan (the language of fire-based creatures) and Common.

The azers don't want to kill the PCs; they just want to return to their home plane. If the PCs allow the azers to touch the shield, they should receive full XP for the encounter even though they did not actually defeat the creatures.

Azers (5): CR 2; Medium-Size Outsider [Fire] (4 ft. tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+6 natural, +2 large shield, +1 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1, warhammer) or +3 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); SA heat; SQ fire defenses; SR 13; AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +4. Will +4; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (metalworks) +6, Climb +4, Listen +4, Search +4, Spot +5. *Feat:* Power Attack.

SA–Heat (Ex): Azers' metallic weapons conduct the heat generated by their bodies, dealing 1 additional point of fire damage (including unarmed attacks) per hit.

SQ–Fire Defenses (Ex): Azers are immune to normal fire and receive a +4 bonus to saving throws vs. magical fire-based attacks.

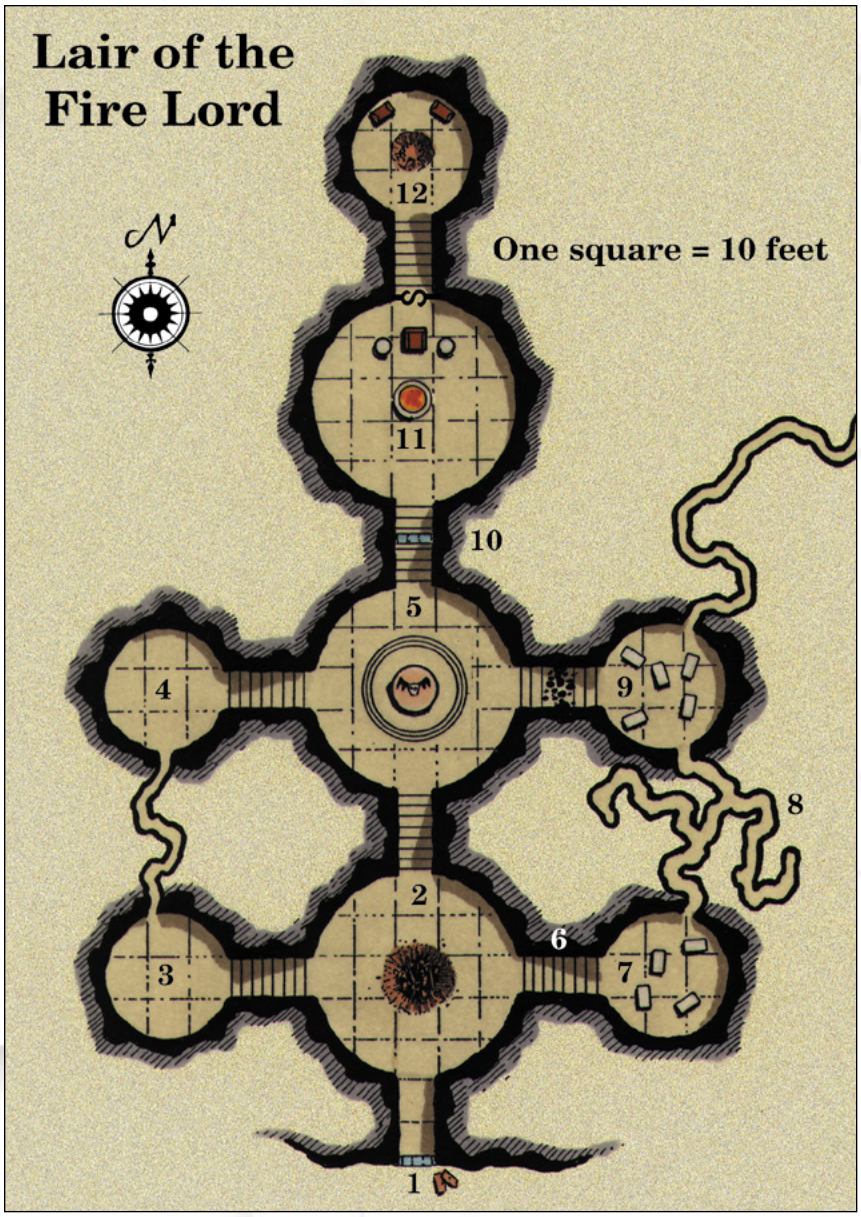
Possessions: Large steel shield, warhammer, shortbow with 10 arrows.

5. Shrine of the Fire Fiend.

The stairs lead up to a huge, 25-foot-high domed room with a raised, circular dais in the middle. Other staircases lead off at the cardinal points. Atop the dais is a reddish, circular altar. The air is warm here.

This was the shrine of the Fire Brigands, where they worshiped their unnamed god. The center of the great, circular, marble altar is carved with the insignia of a devil's skull with batlike wings.

In the center of the altar is a smashed crock, its reddish contents accounting for the dark smear on the altar. The crock once contained the antidote to the poison that put the cult to sleep, but it was later destroyed by the azers. The crock is shattered, and nothing of the antidote remains.



PCs who search the area around the altar and make a successful Search skill check (DC 15) find a small compartment on the north side. Within are a pile of burned scrolls and charred codices—the holy books of the cult—and an iron key. There is nothing but ashes left of the written material, save for one fragment of parchment, laid to one side. This fragment was part of a larger note left by a cultist who survived the sealing of the cavern. The legible part of the note reads as follows:

"... sealed us within, a half a hundred of us, with our sightless slaves and the burning dwarf servants. But we will have the last laugh. Even now our master brews a great potion, inspired by the great Flame Lord. With it, we will slumber long until the dwarves and sightless ones find a way past the magics of our enemies. Then the balm from the earthenware pots will be laid upon our brows, and we will rise again and set fire to the fools who sought to ..." [fragment ends]

The iron key opens the chests in the treasure room (area **12**).

The stairs lead down to areas **2** and **4**. The stairs down to area **9** have been collapsed by the azers to seal in the grimlocks; they end about 10 feet down in a pile of debris. The stairs leading up have been sealed as well; see area **10**.

6. Bell Trap.

The stairway plunges down into the darkness. This area has not been traveled in many years and is thick with cobwebs and dust.

The cobwebs are part of a **Trap** laid by the azers in the past few years to warn them of potential grimlock raids, as described below.

Trap (EL 1): The cobwebs are thin, delicate strands of metallic wire fastened to a number of bells tucked into the corners of the stairway. Anyone blundering down the stairs sets off a cacophony of ringing. The ringing has no effect on most characters. (As the DM, you can call for Will saving throws just to make the players nervous.) However, grimlocks in the area lose their superior Blindfighting ability if caught within the area, due to the noise. The grimlocks have picked up on this and no longer seek to break into azer territories.

Moving down the path without setting off any of the bells requires a Reflex saving throw (DC 17). The sounding of the bells alerts both the azers (if not already aware of the PCs) and the grimlocks. Neither will be surprised. If the PCs possess Winterbok's shield, the azers wait for the grimlocks to weaken or destroy the party, then try to take the shield from the survivors or the PCs' bodies.

Bell Trap: CR 1; Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 20).

This large, circular room was once laid with low stone biers, and notches have been carved into the walls, similar to bunks. Both the notches and the biers are empty, and there is nothing save the rotting fabric of clothing in the room.

7. Empty Catacombs.

This is the final resting place of the Brigands of the Flame. The followers of the Fire Lord took their final drink and retired here, confident that they would be restored to full health by their leader once the azers and grimlocks had found a way out of the sealed complex. Instead, their halls became the larders for the grimlocks, who feasted on the preserved flesh of the followers' bodies.

There is nothing within the room save dust and decay. Along the far wall is a single tunnel, carved by the grimlocks, to allow them access to this catacomb; the tunnel leads to the grimlock burrows (area **8**).

A narrow tunnel plunges into the stone and tightly-packed earth. It is just wide enough for a single Medium-sized creature to crawl through.

8. Grimlock Burrows.

This tunnel was carved by the grimlocks, who were sealed in by the azers after the sightless creatures started raiding the bodies of the entombed brigands. The passage is wide enough for a Medium-size creature or smaller to pass through; a Large creature would need to make a successful Reflex save (DC 20) to avoid being stuck for 1d4+1 rounds, while creatures of Huge size or greater cannot navigate the tunnel. Within the tunnel, all slashing weapons deal half base damage, while piercing and blunt weapons are unaffected.

If warned by the bell trap in area **6**, the grimlocks place a guard in the tunnel.

Creature (EL 1): The grimlock guard uses its Hide ability to blend into its surroundings. Detecting the grimlock requires a successful Spot check opposed by its Hide skill check. If the grimlocks have not been warned, this grimlock is with the others in the grimlock lair (area **9**).

Grimlock (1): CR 1; Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 14; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d8+2, battleaxe); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4. Will +2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +6 (+16 underground), Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +3. *Feat:* Alertness.

SA–Blindsight (Ex): Grimlocks suffer no penalties in melee combat and can detect all foes within 40 feet as a sighted creature would. Beyond that range they treat all targets as totally concealed. (See "Combat Modifiers" in Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*.) However, grimlocks are susceptible to sound- and scent-based attacks and are affected normally by loud noises and sonic spells (for example, *ghost sound* or *silence*) and overpowering odors (such as *stinking cloud* or incense-heavy air). Negating a grimlock's sense of smell or hearing reduces this ability to normal Blind-Fight (as the feat). If both are so affected, the grimlock is effectively blind.

SQ–Immunities: Grimlocks are immune to gaze attacks, visual effects, illusions, and other attack forms that rely on sight.

SQ–Scent (Ex): The grimlocks can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponents are upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

9. Grimlock Lair.

The narrow tunnel opens into another large room, similar the first, with alcoves carved into the walls and low stone biers scattered around the room. The place has a rich, fetid smell.

This is the grimlocks' lair. There are five present (six if the guard in area **8** was not previously encountered, fewer if the heroes have dealt with any grimlocks outside the lair).

The far side of the lair has a tunnel similar to the first. The air from the northern tunnel is cooler and leads to a concealed entrance farther down the hill. The grimlocks, having depleted their supply of preserved meats, have only recently punched this tunnel through to the surface and have started hunting in the area.

Creatures (EL 5): If alerted to the PCs' approach, the grimlocks use their Hide skills to conceal themselves and try to catch the first hero flat-footed as he or she exits the tunnel. The lead character can attempt an opposed Spot skill check against the grimlock's Hide skill check to spot them, in which case the grimlocks are seen as hulking shadows and the PC is not caught flat-footed.

If the grimlocks have not been warned, the lead PC can get out of the tunnel and stand up without harm. Initiative between the PC and the grimlocks is rolled normally.

Grimlocks (5): hp 14 each; see area **8** for full statistics.

10. Sealed Wall.

The stairway ends suddenly with a large wall made of rough, mortared stones. The mortar is dry and crumbling, and the wall is warm to the touch. The wall is scrawled with a crude representation of a bat-winged devil's skull.

The wall was built by the azers and grimlock slaves to seal the Fire Lord in his final resting place. The wall does not look sturdy, and a character can break the mortar and pull out the stones with a successful Strength Check (DC 23). However, given its position (halfway up a staircase), breaking the wall causes the rocks to tumble down into area **9**, inflicting 1d6 points of damage to those on the staircase. Characters on the stairs are entitled to a Reflex saving throw (DC 14) to avoid the falling debris.

11. Final Rest of the Fire Lord.

This circular room is extremely warm, its walls decorated with red and yellow frescoes showing flames consuming all manner of victims. At the far end of the room is a raised throne flanked by two great basins. Seated on the throne is a human figure dressed in black armor. The figure makes no motion as you enter the room.

The figure is the Fire Lord, the leader of the Brigands of the Flame, who, after poisoning his followers, retired to this throne to rest in well-preserved slumber until the azers and grimlocks found a way out. He is dead, the balm needed to restore him spilled out by the rebellious azers. His armor is described under **Treasure** below.

The basins on either side once contained the poison used by the Brigands of the Flame, but the liquid has evaporated over the years, leaving a thick crystalline residue. It cannot be restored to its original form. Any PC who tastes the residue is poisoned. One minute (10 rounds) after sampling the residue, the PC must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or fall unconscious for 1d3 hours.

The fire in the center of the room burns with a *continual flame* spell, but it is not the source of the heat. PCs making a successful Search skill check (DC 10) find a secret door along the wall opposite the entrance. This part of the wall is very

warm, enabling the PCs to find the door and its opening mechanism with relative ease.

Treasure: The Fire Lord is dressed in ornate black armor. The full plate armor is of masterwork quality and recognized in the nearby area as belonging to the legendary Fire Lord. (Masterwork armor functions like normal armor except that all armor check penalties are reduced by 1.) The armor includes a black visored helm with red-tinted "wings" of flame protruding from the sides. The armor is worth 1,650 gp intact.

12. Treasure Vault.

You are struck by a warm gust of air. A staircase down leads into a great circular room. At the center of the room is a burning, circular hearth. At the far end of the room, beyond the hearth, are two iron chests.

The room is painfully warm. The fire in the central pit is actually the **Creature** summoned to guard the **Treasure**.

Creature (EL 3): The fire is, in fact, a Medium-size fire elemental that has been commanded to wait until someone touches the chests without speaking the correct password ("Death" in the Ignan language). Then it attacks, striking those nearest the chests first.

Medium Fire Elemental (1): CR 3; Medium-Size Elemental (8 ft. tall); HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural); Atk +6 melee (1d6+1, slam + 1d6, burn); SA burn; SQ fire defenses; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 4, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (slam).

SA–Burn (Ex): Those hit by the elemental's slam attack must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 14) or catch fire. The flame burns 1d4 rounds and inflicts 1d6 points of damage per round. A burning creature can take a move-equivalent action to put out the flame.

SQ–Fire Defenses (Ex): The elemental is immune to fire and suffers double damage from cold-based attacks on a failed saving throw.

Treasure: Each chest is locked. The iron key found within the altar in area **5** unlocks both chests. PCs can pick a lock by making a successful Disable Device skill check (DC 20) or smash open the chest (Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 15).

The first chest contains eight polished citrines (gems) worth 10 gp each, all laid on a bed of yellow silk (worth 20 gp). Hidden in a secret compartment that requires a successful Search skill check (DC 20) to locate is a *minor ring of elemental resistance (fire)* worth 16,000 gp. The second chest contains the Fire Lord's *+1 flaming bastard sword*.

The flaming sword, upon command, is sheathed in fire. The fire does not harm the wielder and deals an extra 1d6 points of fire damage with a successful hit. This additional damage is not multiplied by a critical hit. The weapon is worth 8,335 gp.

Guardians of the Ring

PCs who flee the Fire Lord's lair with the *ring of elemental resistance* in area **12** face one final threat. Removing the ring from the Fire Lord's lair summons three fire mephits.

Creatures (EL 6): The mephits demand the ring's return but have only 20 rounds before they are recalled to their home plane. If the PCs refuse to relinquish the ring, the mephits attack. If the mephits fail to obtain the ring before the 20 rounds have elapsed, they must return to their home plane empty-handed and face the wrath of their fiery god.

Fire Mephits (3): CR 3; Small Outsider (Fire); HD 3d8; hp 13 each; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average); AC 16 (+1 size, +1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d3, claws and 2, fire); SA breath weapon, spell-like abilities, summon mephit; SQ fire subtype, fast healing, damage reduction 5/+1; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +5, Hide +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +7. *Feat:* Improved Initiative.

SA–Breath Weapon (Su): Every 1d4 rounds, a fire mephit can breathe a cone of fire 15 feet long and 15 feet wide at the base. The cone deals 1d8 points of damage or half if a Reflex saving throw (DC 12) succeeds.

SA–Spell-like Abilities (Sp): Once per hour, a fire mephit can cast *magic missile* as a 3rd-level sorcerer. Once per day, a fire mephit can cast *heat metal* as the spell cast by a 6th-level sorcerer (DC 14).

SA–Summon Mephit (Sp): These particular mephits cannot use this ability.

SQ–Fire Subtype (Ex): A fire mephit is immune to fire and suffers double damage from a cold-based attack on a failed saving throw.

SQ–Fast Healing (Ex): A fire mephit heals 1 point of damage each round provided it is still alive and touching a flame at least as large as a torch.

SQ–Damage Reduction (Ex): A fire mephit ignores the first 5 points of damage inflicted by any nonmagical attack.

Back To the Inn

What the PCs find when they return to the Osterhaus Inn depends on whether Winterbok's Shield is at the inn and when the PCs leave the lair. If the PCs have the shield, nothing happens to the inn. Regardless of time, the heroes find Old Jarl there (although his reaction to them might depend on how they acquired the shield earlier).

If the shield remained at the inn and the PCs fail to secure the door to the Fire Lord's Lair behind them (see area 1), the azers attack the inn to retrieve the shield and regain their way home. If the PCs are hot on the azers' trail, they catch up with them. However, should the PCs leave the complex within 2 hours after the azers leave for the inn, they see a thick column of smoke rising from the inn's direction. Going to the inn, they find that the azers have laid a large fire in front of the gates and are burning their way into the inn itself. The azers try to drive away any rescuers and return to burning the inn.

Should the PCs wait longer than 3 hours after letting loose the azers (assuming that they left the shield at the inn), they see a thin stream of smoke rising from the inn (no more than from a normal chimney on a cold day). Arriving there, they find the inn burned to the ground. Seated at the blackened hearth is Old Jarl, looking at the devastation around him. Any horses that were left here have been scattered (though not killed), and anything left for safekeeping has been exposed to the fire. Old Jarl, in this case, is desolate. Maggie was wounded in the attack, and Toby took one of the horses to ride her to a healer. Old Jarl himself has a bandaged arm. Moreover, he blames the PCs for letting loose the fire demons that attacked them. He berates them for their faults (real and imagined) and refuses aid from them. He is waiting for Toby to return with the horse before heading to the healer himself.

If the heroes purchased the shield or borrowed it with a promise to pay, returning with treasure and tales, Old Jarl is pleased with them. He provides free room and board and, in return, asks for one of the party's (nonmagical) shields, which he intends to hang over his mantle, to tell others the story of the group that bested the Lair of the Fire Brigands.

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Encounter Level Chart

Summarized below are the ELs for all of the encounters in this adventure:

Area	Encounter Description	EL
*	3 Wild Dogs	1
*	1 Black Bear	2
*	2 Grimlocks	2
4	5 Azers	3 or 6
	with Jazindur, Azer Sor2	+1
6	Bell Trap	1
8	1 Grimlock	1
9	5 Grimlocks	5
	with Gurge, Grimlock Bbn2	+1
12	1 Medium-size Fire Elemental	3
	with 2 Small Elementals	+1
	with 1 Medium-size Elemental	+1
**	3 Fire Mephits	6

* These are random encounters.
** This encounter is not fixed to a particular location.

Let's Raise the Fire Lord!

The Fire Lord is dead, killed by his own special poison that preserved his body perfectly. An antidote smeared upon him as a balm would bring him back to life, but containers holding that balm have been smashed by the rebellious azers. While a *neutralize poison* spell would not bring him back, a *raise dead, resurrection,* or similar spell would do so.

While bringing back an ancient, deadly enemy from the dead is generally a bad idea, there might be player characters who, for their own reasons, attempt to do so. The restored Fire Lord seems grateful for his rescue, attempting to discover what happened while he was dead. He will not be particularly upset about the deaths (and subsequent devouring) of his followers. His view of the entire proceedings is rather biased—he and his followers were harried by the locals, driven into the mountains, and sealed up to die. Only through his own knowledge did the Fire Lord preserve his followers and himself.

The Fire Lord is agreeable to the PCs as long as it serves his best interests. He seeks to recover his sword and armor if they are taken from him, but not at the risk of his own life.

The raised Fire Lord ditches the heroes at the first opportunity and relocates to a nearby area to start a new cult and reform his brigands. The heroes are ignored unless they get in the way. If they prove troublesome, the Fire Lord attempts to have them killed.

The Fire Lord, Male Human Ftr10: CR 10; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); hp 79; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor); AC 19 (+8 armor, +1 Dex); Atk +15/+10 melee (1d10+6/crit 17-20, +1 flaming bastard sword); AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +13, Gather Information +6 Intimidate +7, Jump +13, Ride +12, Search +6, Spot +5. *Feats:* Cleave, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Great Cleave, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

Dark Times in Sherwood

Where's Robin Hood When You Need Him?

by Ian Malcomson

artwork by Trevor Hairsine & Greg Staples, cartography by Craig Zipse
poster by Stephen Daniele

"Dark Times in Sherwood" is a D&D adventure inspired by the Legends of Sherwood articles in Dragon Magazine *#274. Although these articles are not required to enjoy this scenario, DMs and players will find the background material and additional campaign rules presented therein useful. This adventure is designed for four 3rd-level PCs and assumes that the party consists of outlaws operating within Sherwood Forest. It can be adjusted for characters of levels 1-9 by increasing or decreasing the levels of the major villains, increasing or decreasing the number of foes within certain encounters, and/or adjusting the damage inflicted by traps. For more details, see the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar.*

Although the adventure makes use of certain "real life" locations, the spirit of the adventure should be taken in the light of the heroic legends of Robin Hood rather than in any accurate, historical view.

Adventure Background

The plot of the adventure revolves around the schemes of Baron Isambart de Belame in his bid to gain political power within England and spread the influence of the dark master he serves. To these ends, he perceives three major obstacles.

The first, and that which he sees as the major obstacle to overcome, is the existing hierarchy of power within his locality. De Belame's major target, at least at this time, is the Sheriff of Nottingham. If he can somehow discredit the Sheriff in the eyes of Prince John (the current regent of England), and at the same time elevate his own standing, the position of Sheriff could be his. Of course, de Belame's arrogance does not stop there, but he is wise enough to recognize that taking one step at a time ensures more chance of victory in the long run.

The second, which the diabolical baron views as something that must be ground down over time rather than trodden underfoot in the immediate future, is the Church. Fortunately, he has managed to make an ally of the Sheriff's brother, Abbot Hugo de Rainault. De Belame considers Abbot Hugo to be somewhat of an idiot, but a useful one nonetheless, both for his standing within the Church and for his connections to the Sheriff.

The third, which de Belame considers a mere fly to be swatted as he sees fit, are the "do-gooder" outlaws of Sherwood. The Sheriff's apparent inability to track down these outlaws is something de Belame feels is worthy of exploitation, while at the same time he recognizes the trouble these outcasts could cause, particularly due to the relationship they have with the commoners of the region.

His alliance with Abbot Hugo firmly in place, de Belame feels he has taken the first, necessary steps down the path he must take to reduce the Church sufficiently to allow his own dark beliefs to take hold. He now intends to cause chaos within the district, forcing the Sheriff to overextend his already incompetent outlaw hunting resources. Prince John has made it known that he will be visiting Nottingham within a fortnight. If he arrives to see a county in disarray, with predatory bandits threatening routes through Sherwood and the commoners on the verge of rebellion, it is more than likely that the Prince would consider the position of Sheriff of Nottingham open in short order. If de Belame were then to step up with a plan to bring order back to the district, and even implement that plan successfully before the eyes of the Prince, a likely candidate to replace the Sheriff could, obviously, be found in him.

Thus, de Belame has assembled one of the most bloodthirsty groups to ever walk in the shade of the forest, to pose as both outlaws and Norman soldiers. The brigands' mission is simple: Burn, pillage, destroy, and generally bring dark times to Sherwood.

Running the Adventure

The course of this scenario depends on the decisions made by the PCs. Feel free to add, delete, or otherwise modify later events and encounters to reflect actions taken by the characters. Let the fate of the PCs lie in their own hands, rather than push them, however subtly, along a predetermined path.

Read through the text and study the maps carefully before play commences. Since some of the NPCs described herein could potentially appear in more than one encounter, consider transferring their statistics to reference cards to avoid having to flip back and forth through the text during play.

Scaling the Adventure

DMs can modify the adventure for parties of higher or lower level by increasing or decreasing the number of foes and making the villains stronger or weaker. Remember that these changes will reduce or increase the total number of XPs available for a given party.

For 1st- to 2nd-level PCs: Run the module as written. However, be aware that the PCs might need to rest and recuperate more often between encounters. Be careful with encounters of EL 5 or higher; these encounters could result in party fatalities unless the PCs have assistance or other options for dealing with them. You might need to remind players that retreat is often the better part of valor. You might also consider dropping one of the evil outlaws (Justin for 1st-level PCs, Drystan for 2nd-level PCs) from the encounter at the broch.

For 4th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written. However, PCs should not be able to rely on aid from John Carter and the Sheriff's men.

For 5th- to 6th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written. However, PCs should not be able to rely on aid from John Carter and the Sheriff's men. To make the encounter with the evil outlaws more challenging, consider adding two or three new outlaws with statistics comparable to the others. Add more guards to Castle de Belame, and feel free to place some guards in the keep proper.

For 7th- to 9th-level PCs: Use the suggestions given under "Playing Robin Hood" below to modify the adventure.

Note that the challenge-to-treasure ratio for this adventure is different from most D&D adventures. Sherwood is a low-treasure campaign setting; the PCs' goal should never be to hoard gold or beef up their selection of magic items (although, admittedly, a little gold and a magic potion or two can be extremely useful). As the DM, feel free to add or subtract treasure as you see fit.

Playing Robin Hood

Dragon Magazine #274 presents statistics for Robin Hood and his merry men. You might wish to run the adventure using these pregenerated characters instead of the player's own characters. Because Robin and his band are of a higher level than the adventure recommends, certain changes are necessary to challenge these famous outlaws. Some suggestions include:

- Using the higher-level statistics for Isambart de Belame and Guy of Gisburn presented in *Dragon Magazine*.
- Increasing the levels of the NPCs in Justin's band. Generally, Justin should be one level higher than the highest-level character in the party. Other members of the evil outlaws, not to mention John Carter, should be increased in level by a similar amount.
- Increasing the damage done by traps. For instance, a trap that deals 2d6 points of damage might deal 2d8 or 3d6 points of damage instead.
- Increasing the DCs for certain checks and saving throws. For instance, the Search DC for finding Brice's traps might be increased from 20 to 23.
- Increasing the numbers of foes in certain encounters. For example, more zombies could be added to Isambart de Belame's Incantestibule. Conversely, the DM might wish to replace the zombies with a more powerful form of undead—possibly ghasts or wights.

Careful consideration is needed before modifying certain NPCs, since their statistics reflect the abilities of such characters drawn from various Robin Hood sources. Balancing encounters with these NPCs can be achieved by adding more (or more powerful) allies for them, rather than adjusting the NPCs themselves.

The adventure consists of Encounters, which are keyed to specific locations on the maps, and Events, which are triggered by time or the actions of the PCs but are not tied to a keyed location. The PCs can circumvent an event or encounter, but several of them contain clues the PCs will need to better understand the events unfolding in Sherwood. Events are detailed first, followed by the encounters in Sherwood Forest and the encounters in Castle de Belame.

Unlike many D&D adventures, the adversaries arrayed against the PCs are not monsters (although this is a debatable fact). Additionally, many of them possess wit and intelligence, and they should be played accordingly. In some re-tellings of the Robin Hood stories, particularly those of a more swashbuckling nature, heroes and villains often involve themselves in battles of wit whilst clashing steel. Feel free to encourage your players to do the same! Fights should, after all, be more than mere dice-fests.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins in Sherwood itself. For several days, the PCs have heard rumors of vicious attacks made against the commoners inhabiting the region and to travelers and merchants on the road. The culprits appear to be two separate groups: a small unit of Norman soldiers employed by the Sheriff of Nottingham and a group of bandits of a particularly nasty nature who have recently moved to the forest.

While investigating these rumors, the PCs discover the body of one of the Sheriff's foresters. The forester accidentally discovered the lair of de Belame's bandits, who murdered him. The PCs find the forester's body washed up by the river. The PCs also witness first-hand the destruction wrought by the Norman unit, in the shape of hamlets reduced to nothing but ash and littered corpses.

The Sheriff, aware that something is wrong in Sherwood, dispatches a force to bring order back to the region.

Adding all of the clues together, the PCs should deduce that the rogue Normans and the ruthless bandits are one and the same. The PCs track the bandits to a makeshift broch (a large ring of earth with a central courtyard) they are using as a base. The PCs mount an attack on the broch, leaving the members of the bandit group slain, captured, or fleeing for their lives.

The PCs discover that the bandits were working for Baron de Belame and head off to confront the baron at his crag-top castle. On the way, they are confronted by a small force led by Sir Guy of Gisburn. Allying himself with de Belame against the out-of-favor Sheriff of Nottingham, Guy leads a small detachment of soldiers to Castle de Belame to garrison the fortress while de Belame's forces secure Nottingham. Recognizing the PCs as foes of de Belame and fearing that he might be branded a traitor if the baron is defeated, Guy, playing both sides, gives the PCs a small vial of holy water and some cryptic lore regarding its potential powers over darkness.

Meanwhile, off stage, the Normans arrive at Nottingham, only to find the Sheriff languishing in the town's jail. Prince John has been and gone, and it is by his order that the current fate of the Sheriff has come to pass. Sir Roger the Cruel, de Belame's man, is now running the place in the name of his master. Roger is simply preparing the way to smooth the baron's elevation to the position of Sheriff.

The adventure reaches its climax when the PCs finally penetrate de Belame's stronghold. Although the castle is well-guarded, many of the men are loyal to Guy and Hugo, and they might aid the PCs in their endeavors. Battling their way to the main keep, the PCs must engage in a harrowing pursuit through the halls of that edifice as they close in on the evil mastermind. Using secret pathways, the baron flees to his Incantestibule—a chamber of pure evil carved from the rock beneath an ancient stone circle. The inherent power in the place enhances de Belame's dark magic, but these powers can be negated using the holy water Guy placed in the PCs' hands.

Back in Nottingham, the Norman acquaintances of the PCs lead a minor rebellion against Sir Roger the Cruel. Usurping control of the castle, they free the Sheriff, who quickly organizes the round-up of Baron de Belame's men in the town.

With de Belame captured, Guy allows the PCs to make good their escape. Although the situation in Sherwood takes time to heal, the status quo has been restored. With both de Belame and Sir Roger in chains, and with the evidence supplied to him by Hugo and Guy, the Sheriff can work to restore his position in the eyes of the Prince.

Features of the Wilderness Map

The wilderness map shows a portion of the northern reaches of Sherwood Forest, in the vicinity of the village of Edwinstowe. Most of the region is covered by the forest.

A handful of roads are marked on the map, and most of these consist of hard-packed earth. The general condition of these roads means that they are treated as trails for movement purposes. The exception is the Nottingham road, running across the map from north to south. This road is partially cobbled and in much better repair.

All rivers generally range from 11-20 feet wide. Roll 1d10+10 to determine river width in feet, if necessary. The exception to this is the northern extent of the River Maun, which is roughly 30-40 feet wide (roll 2d6+28).

Thorps & Hamlets

Almost all of the communities marked on the wilderness map are either thorps or hamlets, as defined in Chapter 4: Adventures in the *DMG*.

A "Conventional" community has a traditional form of government—for example, a mayor, a town council, or a noble ruling over the surrounding area under a greater liege. Choose whichever seems most appropriate to the area.

The alignment of the ruler (or rulers) of a community need not conform to that of all or even the majority of the residents, although this is usually the case. Due to their generally organized and organizing nature, most power centers are lawful. Communities with a lawful good power center usually have a codified set of laws, and most people willingly obey them. Communities with a neutral good power center rarely feel it influencing them other than to help them when they are in need.

Every community has a gold piece limit based on its size and population. The gold piece limit is an indicator of the most expensive item available in that community. Nothing that costs more than a community's gp limit is available for purchase there. Anything under that limit is likely available.

To determine the community's total assets, or the total value of all equipment for sale at any given time, multiply half the gp limit by the one-tenth of the community's population.

♕ **Typical Thorp**: Conventional; AL NG; 40-gp limit; Assets 20 gp × 0.1 × Population; Population 20-80 (humans only). If the DM wishes to run a more fantasy-based campaign, treat the thorp's population as Isolated (96% human, 2% halfling, 1% elf, 1% dwarf).

Authority Figure: None.

Important Characters: You should create important NPCs as needed. Most will be 1st-level commoners.

Others: You may use the tables in Chapter 4: Adventures in the *DMG* to determine the inhabitants of a typical thorp.

Notes: Thorps consist entirely of hovels manufactured from wood and thatch.

♕ **Typical Hamlet:** Conventional; AL LG; 100-gp limit; Assets 50 gp × 0.1 × Population; Population 81-200 (humans only). If the DM wishes to run a more fantasy-based campaign, treat the hamlet's population as Isolated (96% human, 2% halfling, 1% elf, 1% dwarf).

Authority Figure: Mayor, Ari1 (minor nobleman or noblewoman).

Important Characters: You should create important NPCs as needed. Most will be 1st-level commoners or 1st- to 3rd-level experts.

Others: You can use the tables in Chapter 4: Adventures in the *DMG* to determine the inhabitants of a typical hamlet.

Notes: Hamlets are usually surrounded by farmland. They consist of a few stone buildings (a church, if present, and maybe one or two other communal buildings) and several dozen thatched, wooden structures.

Events

This section deals with events occurring within northern Sherwood during the course of this adventure.

The section begins with the discovery of a body and ends with the storming of de Belame's castle. Proceed to **Event 1.** Use the following table to determine random events during the course of the adventure.

Random Events

Roll 1d8 twice per day and twice per night, and consult the following table.

Roll	Day	Night
1-3	No Encounter	No Encounter
4	Merchant Attacked	Settlement Attacked
5	Outlaw Sighting	Outlaw Sighting
6	Norman Sighting	Norman Sighting
7	Travelers Attacked	Settlement Burned
8	Settlement Attacked	Settlement Burned

Merchant Attacked: In Norman guise, the bandits attack a merchant on one of the roads. You must decide where the attack takes place. If the PCs visit the location, they see the broken carts and corpses of unfortunate victims. If the PCs visit a hamlet or village close to the location of the attack, they might hear rumors pertaining to it. Additional clues can be found at the site (for example, arrows with fletchings identical to those found at other attack sites).

Outlaw Sighting: The PCs catch a glimpse of the false outlaws ahead in the woods. If the PCs give chase, the bandits escape but might leave behind clues of their passage. PCs with the Track feat can make a Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 13, or DC 16 in foggy conditions) to follow the trail. A successful roll leads the PCs to the river running southward from Clipstone; at that point, the trail vanishes. If the PCs have previously encountered the outlaws in their Norman disguises, they might be recognized as being one and the same. A successful Spot skill check (opposed by the bandits' Disguise skill checks) reveals this. During the night, add a +5 DC penalty to the Spot check; PCs with low-light vision or darkvision ignore this penalty.

Norman Sighting: During the day, this will be the Norman patrol sent to the forest by the Sheriff of Nottingham. PCs who make a successful Sense Motive skill check (DC 10) notice that they are not acting like a group of murderers. If the PCs decide to meet with them, run **Event 2.** During the night, the

NPC Attitudes

Over the course of the adventure, the PCs are likely to visit one or more communities in the Sherwood Forest region. Whenever a PC deals with the locals, you must determine the NPCs' attitude. A character can try to use Charisma to influence this attitude as described below.

Attitude	Actions & Inclinations
Hostile	Takes risks to hurt you. Might attack, interfere, berate, or flee.
Unfriendly	Wishes you ill. Might gossip, mislead, avoid, insult, or watch suspiciously.
Indifferent	Doesn't much care. Provides socially expected interaction.
Friendly	Wishes you well. Might chat, advise, offer limited help, or advocate.
Helpful	Takes risks to help you. Might protect, back up, heal, or aid.

Choose the attitude of an NPC or NPCs based on circumstances, and allow PCs to alter that attitude by making a Charisma check or Diplomacy skill check. Roll the check and consult the appropriate initial attitude line to see the result of the roll. The more friendly that people are toward the PCs, the easier it is to improve their attitudes. It doesn't take a roll, just the right words and deeds, to make someone more hostile. Note that a low roll can make an NPC less favorably inclined toward a character. In general, a character cannot repeat attempts to influence someone.

	New Attitude				
Initial Attitude	Hostile	Unfriendly	Indifferent	Friendly	Helpful
Hostile	Less than 20	20	25	35	50
Unfriendly	Less than 5	5	15	25	40
Indifferent	—	Less than 1	1	15	30
Friendly	—	—	Less than 1	1	20

Normans are actually the false outlaws in disguise. In this case, they are acting in a furtive manner. A successful Spot skill check (opposed by the bandits' Disguise skill checks) allows the PCs to identify the Normans as being the members of the bandit group in disguise, but only if the outlaws have been previously sighted (see above). A +5 DC penalty applies to the Spot check at night; PCs with low-light vision or darkvision ignore this penalty.

Travelers Attacked: This is similar to the Merchant Attacked event but involves other groups traveling on the roads. Examples include peasants on their way to one of the settlements, friars moving through the area, or any other group the DM desires. If this site is visited by the PCs, they might discover the remains of the victims and possibly other clues.

Settlement Attacked: One of the thorps or hamlets on the map, determined randomly but excluding Clipstone, is attacked by the bandits. The village survives the attack, but not before a handful of villagers die in its defense. Decide whether the bandits were in Norman guise or not. If the PCs are mistaken for the outlaws, treat the locals as unfriendly (as described in the "NPC Attitudes" sidebar).

Settlement Burned: One of the thorps or hamlets marked on the map, other than those already destroyed, is burned to the ground by the bandits. As with the Village Attacked event, determine whether the bandits were operating in Norman or outlaw guise during the attack. If the PCs are mistaken for outlaws, treat the locals as hostile (as described in the "NPC Attitudes" sidebar).

Event 1. Death in the Woods. This event takes place on the banks of the River Maun, northeast of the village of Clipstone (area 1 on the wilderness map). When the PCs are ready to begin, read or summarize the following:

> 'Tis late spring in Sherwood Forest, and mist from the April rains hangs like a maiden's veil over the leafy, virgin boughs. You arose early this morn, for the hungry of Clipstone could well do with the bread and gold you liberated from some kindly Norman merchant on the Edwinstowe road yesterday evening.
>
> The forest breaks just above the Maun River, and you hear its bubbling rambles. The riverbank makes the best road to your destination. Your jovial mood vanishes with the scene at the river. Washed into an overhanging collection of roots, limp and blue, is the body of someone you know. The man, Hugh Farrow, was one of the few Norman foresters sympathetic to your cause. He turned a blind eye when deer and wood were pilfered from the forest by the needy. But how came him hence? Do you brave the slippery sod of the dew-soaked bank to investigate?

Investigating Hugh Farrow's body reveals that he was killed by an arrow through the heart. The arrowhead is of Norman design. A successful Heal check (DC 15) reveals that Hugh has been dead for just over a day. As far as the PCs can recall, Hugh had no family.

Hugh came close to discovering the lair of de Belame's outlaws. He managed to negotiate and dismantle several of Brice's traps (see area **7**) and followed the outlaws' tracks to the lake south of Clipstone. The outlaws ambushed him, shot him dead, and dumped his body in the lake, from where it has been washed to its present location. If the PCs cast a *speak with dead* spell on the corpse, they learn only that Hugh wanted to learn the identities of a group of outlaws blamed for setting fires in small communities. He suspects that the outlaws are in league with a band of renegade Norman soldiers and does not suspect that they are one in the same. He did not actually see his slayers.

Nothing remains of the arrow's fletchings, but comparison of the arrowhead with any found in later events and encounters (particularly those retrieved from burned thorps and hamlets) reveals a basic similarity in design.

Event 2. The Norman Patrol. This event can take place while the characters are searching for the evil outlaws. Depending on how the PCs treat this event, they might gain useful allies in both the hunt for de Belame's outlaws and in the final battle against them (**Event 3**). The event can be introduced if the PCs are having difficulty with their investigation. If this event occurs after the PCs have battled the bandits in their lair, John Carter and his patrol (see below) might initially mistake the PCs for de Belame's outlaws, which could introduce an interesting roleplaying situation as the PCs attempt to persuade Carter of their innocence—at least, with regard to the recent, vicious criminal depredations in Sherwood Forest.

The event begins as the PCs discover the presence of a Norman patrol sent from Nottingham to patrol Sherwood Forest. They learn of this either through their own actions or from peasants in any settlement they visit. The following description can be used in the latter case. Read or paraphrase the following to the PCs:

> A young woman hails you. Her voice is panicky and frightened as she speaks. "They're here, in the forest! Please, help us! They might come here next!"

The woman has heard that a troop of Norman soldiers has entered Sherwood Forest, and she fears that these are the brigands who have been attacking hamlets and burning other small settlements to the ground. The PCs might have already witnessed the results of such attacks (in "Random Events" above). If asked to explain herself, she replies as follows:

> "The Norman murderers—the ones who have been burning hamlets and thorps in the Forest! Oh, please help!"

The Norman soldiers are making no attempt to hide their trail and are moving fairly slowly as they thoroughly investigate the region. PCs with the Track feat who make a successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 11) can follow their trail.

If the patrol's actions are observed, the PCs will note that they are doing nothing untoward and appear quite concerned (although not in any friendly manner) over the plight of the commonfolk in light of the recent attacks.

If the patrol is confronted, John Carter (the leader of the patrol) attempts to parley with the PCs, unless the PCs do anything that leads him to suspect them capable of committing the atrocities the patrol has encountered thus far. If the PCs manage to persuade Carter that their intentions are honorable (and vice versa), Carter offers an alliance. Earning this trust requires good roleplaying and a successful Diplomacy skill check (DC 15).

Major Villains

The following section describes the major villains the party will face in the course of the adventure. Treat these individuals as characters in their own right, rather than static obstacles for the PCs to overcome.

Several other important NPCs are mentioned by name throughout the module but play no direct role in the adventure itself. More information about these personalities (Abbot Hugo, the Sheriff of Nottingham, Sir Roger of Doncaster, and Prince John) can be found in *Dragon Magazine* #274.

Note that Baron Isambart de Belame and Sir Guy of Gisburn also appear in the "Royals & Rogues" article in *Dragon Magazine* #274. The characters presented below are somewhat weaker than their *Dragon Magazine* counterparts, as this adventure is written for low-level characters. Baron de Belame is a 6th-level necromancer in this adventure; the "Royals & Rogues" article in *Dragon Magazine* gives Baron de Belame's statistics as a 10th-level necromancer. Likewise, Sir Guy of Gisburn is a 4th-level fighter in this adventure and an 8th-level fighter in the "Royals & Rogues" article. DMs who wish to run this adventure for characters of higher level (7+) should use these two NPCs as they are presented in *Dragon Magazine*.

Baron Isambart de Belame
Male Human, 6th-level Necromancer

Strength	12 (+1)	Fortitude Save	+2
Dexterity	14 (+2)	Reflex Save	+4
Constitution	10 (0)	Will Save	+7
Intelligence	18 (+4)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	16 (+3)	Size	6 ft. 3 in.
Armor Class	12	Melee Attack:	+4
Hit Points	18	Ranged Attack:	+5

Skills: Alchemy +8, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (ancient history) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (astrology) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +3, Ride +3, Scry +9, Sense Motive +3, Speak Language (Latin), Spellcraft +12, Spot +5.

Feats: Brew Potion, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Necromancy).

Spells (5/5/5/4): 0—*dancing lights, detect magic, disrupt undead*, ghost sound, read magic;* 1st—*chill touch*, comprehend languages, obscuring mist, shield, true strike;* 2nd—*cat's grace, detect thoughts, ghoul touch*, spectral hand*, whispering wind;* 3rd—*dispel magic, keen edge, suggestion, vampiric touch**. De Belame cannot cast spells from the Evocation school. The Spell Focus feat increases the DC of Isambart's necromantic spells (marked with an asterisk) by 2.

Possessions: Longsword, *+1 dagger of animate dead* (allows the wielder to *animate dead* 1/day by touching the tip of the dagger to a lifeless corpse; only necromancers can call on this awesome power), master key (opens all doors in his castle).

Background: Isambart de Belame is a wicked, sorcerous figure who deals in dark magic. He is, in spite of his un-Christian-like activities, an ally of both Abbot Hugo and Roger of Doncaster (although Hugo plots against him). He is a born schemer constantly striving to gain power and wealth. Such is the reputation of the man that his home, Castle de Belame, is known as Evil Hold to those opposing his beliefs.

Sir Guy of Gisburn
Male Human, 4th-level Fighter

Strength	16 (+3)	Fortitude Save	+6
Dexterity	10 (0)	Reflex Save	+1
Constitution	15 (+2)	Will Save	+0
Intelligence	8 (-1)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	10 (0)	Speed	20 ft.
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	5 ft. 10 in.
Armor Class	16	Melee Attack:	+7
Hit Points	39	Ranged Attack:	+4

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +3, Ride +2, Swim +4.

Feats: Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Trample, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, light crossbow, quiver of bolts, light lance, dagger.

Background: Sir Guy of Gisburn is the steward of Abbot Hugo. Although Guy has ambitions above his station, he possesses neither the intelligence nor the leadership qualities necessary to achieve them. He serves loyally while he must but is constantly on the look-out for situations that he can exploit to increase his personal influence. The man is cowardly when not surrounded by the soldiery he commands.

If the PCs ally themselves with Carter, read or paraphrase the following:

> John Carter steps toward you, sheathing his sword and extending his hand, if not in friendship, then in something that might pass as such for the time being.
>
> "It seems we find ourselves allies in this mess. We have both seen what is happening here. Shall we throw aside our rivalries for this cause? We could certainly do with you on our side in this matter."

If the PCs have not yet discovered that the "Normans" responsible for burning peasant settlements and the outlaws responsible for murdering travelers and wayfarers are one and the same, Carter can provide the following information:

> "It seems that neither merchant nor peasant is safe from these heathens. A friar of Rufford gave us a description of a band of soldiers that attacked their holdings not long past, and although the garb differs, I'll be the hind end of a stag if that lot were not one and the same. Here, this was found in the heart of one friar too brave for this life."

Carter shows the PCs an arrow. If the PCs have visited other sites of the evil outlaws' attacks, they recognize the fletchings as being identical to other arrows they might have discovered. The arrowhead bears a striking resemblance to the one pulled from Hugh Farrow's body (**Event 1**).

Creatures (EL 9): The Norman patrol consists of John Carter, a high-ranking forester who serves the Sheriff of Nottingham and the King, four foresters (1st-level rangers), and

twelve soldiers organized into two units of six men, each led by a captain. Note that, under normal circumstances, Carter and the captains would be mounted. Due to the nature of their mission in Sherwood Forest, they have left their steeds behind.

John Carter, Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 3d10+9; hp 30; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 armor, +2 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword); or +5 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, longbow); SQ favored enemy (outlaws); AL LN; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills: Craft (bowmaking) +4, Heal +4, Hide +6, Listen +6 (includes +2 bonus for Alertness), Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Search +3, Spot +6 (includes +2 bonus for Alertness), Swim +4, Wilderness Lore +6. *Feats:* Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Track.

SQ—Favored Enemy: See Chapter 3: Classes in the *PH*.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, longsword, longbow with 20 arrows, dagger, sack, bedroll, flint & steel.

Background: Carter is loyal to both his Sheriff and his King (Richard, that is; he cares little for John). He is fair and will turn a blind eye when he witnesses theft from the Forest by those in abject need. He is swift to administer punishment without mercy otherwise.

Norman Foresters, Male Human Rgr1 (4): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d10; hp 6 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 studded leather armor, +1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d6/crit ×3, handaxe); or +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); SQ favored enemy (outlaws); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (bowmaking) +2, Hide +4, Knowledge (nature) +2, Move Silently +4, Spot +5 (includes +2 bonus for Alertness), Wilderness Lore +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Track.

SQ—Favored Enemy: See Chapter 3: Classes in the *PH*.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, handaxe, light crossbow with 20 bolts.

Norman Captains, Male Human War2 (2): CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 16 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 shield); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword); or +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +3, Jump +1, Ride +4, Swim +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Toughness.

Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, light crossbow with 10 crossbow bolts, dagger.

Norman Soldiers, Male Human War1 (12): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 9 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 shield); Atk +1 melee (1d8/crit 19-20, longsword); or +1 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Jump +1, Ride +3, Swim +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Toughness.

Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, light crossbow with 10 crossbow bolts, dagger.

Development: The evil outlaws, for obvious reasons, do not wish the PCs and the Normans to join forces. If they learn that the PCs are tracking the patrol, they might engineer a "chance" encounter with the PCs, offering to join forces to bring about the destruction of the "Norman murderers." If any plans worked out by Carter and the PCs involve breaking men up into smaller teams to better cover the area, the false outlaws will ambush any such team they believe they could easily defeat.

Event 3. Battle of the Broch. This event occurs when the PCs have finally tracked de Belame's outlaws to their lair (area **7** on the DM's wilderness map). Refer to area **7** for a description of the broch, and use the "The Broch" map when running this event.

More than a mile south of Clipstone you spot a 15-foot-tall wall of grass-covered earth and stone hidden among the trees, approximately 40 feet south of a small lake. This crude earthen wall encloses a small, roughly circular clearing and has an open gap on the east side. Rising from the courtyard is a 20-foot-tall menhir—a tapered, weather-worn obelisk of gray, pock-marked stone.

"Behind the Scenes" NPCs

The following NPCs do not appear in this adventure but are mentioned in the plot, and each has a small role to play behind the scenes. Complete statistics for each are presented in *Dragon Magazine* #274, although these statistics will need to be modified for low-level characters; suggested levels for this adventure are indicated below.

Prince John "Lackland"
6th-level Human Fighter, NE

John covets the crown of England from his more noble brother, and he cares little but to acquire more power. To this end, he appears weak-willed, being willing to grant favors and land to subordinate nobles to secure their loyalty against King Richard.

Robert de Rainault, Sheriff of Nottingham
8th-level Human Fighter, LE

The Sheriff is a pompous man, secure in his position of high influence and responsibility. In fact, the only man he fears is his liege, Prince John.

Hugo de Rainault, Abbot of St. Mary's
6th-level Human Cleric, LE

The Abbot, brother to the Sheriff, is a wicked man, caring more for his own greed than matters of the church. Most of his actions are angled toward gaining more land or personal wealth. The Abbot has allies in Baron Isambart de Belame and Sir Roger "The Cruel" of Doncaster (although probably not after the events of this particular adventure have occurred), as well as his own lackey, Sir Guy of Gisburn.

Sir Roger "The Cruel" of Doncaster
7th-level Human Fighter, NE

An ally of Isambart de Belame and, by association, Abbot Hugo, Roger's nickname was not earned in vain. He is, indeed, a cruel man and, as a follower of Baron Isambart de Belame, has been party to some of the most nefarious dealings and schemes.

PCs with the Track proficiency who search for tracks and make a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 20 during the day, DC 25 at night) can find a few suspicious bootprints here and there, but nothing leading to or from the broch. (The outlaws are careful to hide their tracks.)

It is unlikely that the PCs (and their Norman allies, if present) can approach the broch without being noticed by the brigands. Brice has engineered several traps in the vicinity, and anyone traveling across the lake is sighted immediately. Unless the PCs are very clever, Justin and his men are prepared for them. When the outlaws are "home," Justin places two lookouts. Regardless of when the PCs arrive, Amice and Drystan are standing guard, peering over (and hidden behind) the enclosing wall of the broch, carefully surveying the countryside. PCs specifically looking for hidden guards are entitled to a Spot skill check, opposed by the outlaws' Hide skill checks, to spot them. Since the wicked outlaws are mostly hidden behind the broch's walls, they receive a +4 circumstance bonus to their Hide skill checks.

Sneaking up on the outlaws' lair requires a successful Hide skill check and a successful Move Silently skill check. These rolls are opposed by the outlaws' Spot and Listen skill checks respectively. PCs who inadvertently trigger one or more of Brice's traps (see area **7**) are automatically seen and heard.

Some basic ground rules that govern the manner in which the bandits defend their lair follow:

☛ The bandits are not stupid (with the exception of Drogo). These individuals are hardened survivors, skilled at dodging peril.

☛ The bandits will not surrender. Justin is well aware of the fate that awaits them if they are arrested. If worse comes to worst, they flee rather than surrender (although they might pretend to surrender as part of their escape plan).

☛ The bandits know the terrain surrounding their lair. Unless pressed, confused, or otherwise disoriented, the bandits will not fall foul of their own traps. Indeed, they might actually pass through a trapped area to draw their foes into it.

☛ The bandits are overconfident. At least initially, the bandits assume that they hold the superior hand in any battle. If the PCs can exploit this, their overconfidence might turn out to be a fatal flaw.

☛ It is not important at this point whether the bandits escape or not. If any of the bandits get away, they will be encountered later when the PCs explore Castle de Belame. It is not important to the adventure as a whole whether the bandits survive this encounter.

☛ The bandits possess little loyalty toward each other. With the exception of Drogo, who is fanatically loyal to Justin (and to Justin alone), the bandits quite happily sacrifice their comrades to ensure their own safety. Amice and Morgan are particularly selfish in this regard. If only one member of the bandit group must be sacrificed to ensure the escape of the others, Justin quite happily sends Brice to his death. He is also willing to sacrifice Drogo to cover his own escape.

The battle is best played out using miniatures or other counters, so the positions of all combatants can be accurately tracked. Cover is available, but only from the cliff (area **8**), lying prone in the undergrowth (treat as one-half concealment), or behind the trunks of trees (treat as one-half cover). Defenders behind the wall of the broch possess one-half cover. Those hidden inside the compound or standing within the central courtyard possess total cover unless they are being attacked through the eastern entrance to the broch, in which case they have three-quarters cover.

Outlaws forced to flee try to escape through the eastern gap in the wall; if passage that way is blocked, they scamper over the wall. This requires a full-round movement action unless a successful Climb skill check (DC 10) is made. Once over the wall, they flee into the woods then head northwest, toward Castle de Belame.

Note that throughout the battle, John Carter will call for the capture, rather than killing, of the outlaws. He wants to bring them to justice, not murder them.

Creatures (EL 8, 3 if John Carter and his Norman soldiers are present): De Belame's outlaws are led by an evil bastard named Justin. The other members of Justin's band are named Amice, Drystan, Morgan, Brice, and Drogo.

Justin, Human Male Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 4d10+8; hp 37; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in chainmail); AC 15 (+3 studded leather armor, +2 Dex) or 19 (+5 chainmail armor, +2 shield, +2 Dex); Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/crit 19-20, longsword); or +7 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, masterwork longbow); AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +3, Craft (bowmaking) +5, Climb +5, Disguise +4, Intuit Direction +1, Jump +4, Ride +4, Swim +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Studded leather armor, chainmail armor (worn only when disguised as a Norman soldier), large wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, masterwork longbow with 40 arrows, map of Sherwood Forest, Norman soldier cloak.

Background: The bastard son of a peasant and a Norman captain, Justin was recruited by a group of bandits operating in the Derbyshire wilderlands, eventually rising to lead the band at age 20 by killing its former head. Captured by de Belame, Justin was offered a choice between servitude and the hangman's noose. Although initially resenting service to the baron, Justin has since grown to enjoy the benefits his position grants.

Justin is a rough, scarred man with a coarse beard that grows properly only on the right side of his face. His left eyebrow is only a patchy trace. His left forearm has an evident bow to it. Justin's icy exterior hides a volcanic temper.

Amice, Female Human Rog3/Nec1: CR 4; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 3d6+3 (Rog) plus 1d4+1 (Nec); hp 19; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in chainmail); AC 14 (+2 leather armor, +2 Dex) or 17 (+5 chainmail armor, +2 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d6, quarterstaff); or +1 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); or +3 ranged (1d4, sling); SA sneak attack +2d6; SD evasion, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Alchemy +3, Bluff +6, Concentration +2, Disguise +6, Hide +8, Innuendo +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Search +8, Swim +6, Spot +6, Tumble +8. *Feats:* Iron Will, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Two-Weapon Fighting.

Spells (4/3): 0—*disrupt undead*, ray of frost, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*cat's grace, chill touch*, obscuring mist*. Amice cannot cast Evocation spells. The Spell Focus feat increases the DC of her necromantic spells (marked with an asterisk) by 2.

Possessions: Leather armor, chainmail armor (worn only when disguised as a Norman soldier), longsword (carried only

when disguised as a Norman soldier), quarterstaff, dagger, sling with 30 bullets, *potion of chill touch*, Norman soldier cloak, spellbook, black soft leather vest & trousers, small silver pentacle pendant (usually hidden), eight silver finger-rings and two thumb-rings of Celtic and Arabic style (10 gp each), flint & steel.

Background: This sadistic, one-time petty cutpurse has become de Belame's most favored servant. The baron has indoctrinated Amice with the teachings of the dark arts, and she has proved an apt pupil. Because of her standing with de Belame, the other outlaws treat her with suspicion born from fear and respect.

Despite her cruel nature, Amice is beautiful to behold. She is slim, well-proportioned, and possesses a stream of raven hair that offsets her pale, angular features.

Drystan, Human Male Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d10+6 (includes Toughness feat); hp 30; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in chainmail); AC 18 (+5 chainmail armor, +2 shield, +1 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword); or +4 melee (1d2 subdual, whip); or +4 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, longbow); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Disguise +1, Handle Animal +2, Hide +2, Ride +2. *Feats:* Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Toughness, Weapon Focus (whip).

Possessions: Chainmail armor, large wooden shield, open-faced helm, longbow with 20 arrows, whip, longsword, dagger, Norman soldier cloak, sack, carved wooden figurine of a horse, copper-plated iron horseshoe.

Background: A one-time horse trainer in Nottingham, Drystan became unhinged as a result of an accident while working with one of his charges. Brutally murdering the beast, his wife, and his daughter, Drystan fled into the wilds, where he was eventually discovered and befriended by Justin.

Drystan is a haunted man, beset by fits of rage and incapable of moral decisions. Because of this, Justin has become his ethical guide (such as that might be).

Drystan appears unremarkable except for the horseshoe-shaped scar that has disfigured his upper lip, smashed his nose, and prevents both eyelids from closing properly. He carries a plated horseshoe—the instrument of his wife's murder—and is prone to fondle it when confused.

Morgan, Male Human Ftr2/Rog1: CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 2d10+2 (Ftr) plus 1d6+1 (Rog); hp 18; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 studded leather armor, +1 shield, +2 Dex) or 18 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 shield, +2 Dex); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/crit 18-20, scimitar); or +4 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +4, Disguise +1, Escape Artist +3, Handle Animal +3, Hide +3, Listen +1, Move Silently +4, Ride +7, Search +3, Swim +5, Tumble +3. *Feats:* Ambidexterity, Blind-Fight, Disarm, Expertise, Lightning Reflexes.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, chainmail armor (worn only when disguised as a Norman soldier), small wooden shield, open-faced helm, Saracen scimitar, eight daggers, light crossbow with 20 crossbow bolts, Norman soldier cloak, small sack, whetstone, flint & steel.

Background: The son of a Welsh camp follower and one of several philandering Crusader knights, Morgan studied the fighting styles of the Middle East, learning enough to break free from a sedentary life and make a living as a hired killer. He was eventually hired, through Roger of Doncaster, into the permanent employ of Baron de Belame.

Morgan is a slight, short man with a deceptively delicate-looking build often used to gain surprise over his foes. He is obsessively tidy about his appearance, constantly clearing dirt from his fingernails when bored. Only Morgan's eyes show any indication of the man's mood. Normally, they appear as featureless, grey pools. When the opportunity to kill arises, they burn with a frightening passion. Morgan possesses a quick temper, held barely in check by his own willpower. Instead of explosions of rage, however, Morgan's demeanor becomes increasingly frigid as his anger grows.

Brice, Male Human Ftr1/Rog1: CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 1d10 (Ftr) plus 1d6 (Rog); hp 13; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor); AC 17 (+3 studded leather armor, +1 small shield, +3 Dex) or 19 (+5 chainmail armor, +2 large shield, +3 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword); or +4 ranged (1d4+1/crit 19-20, thrown dagger); or +4 ranged (1d8/crit ×3, longbow); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Bluff +2, Climb +4, Craft (carpentry) +3, Disguise +2, Hide +5, Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Swim +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Mobility.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, small wooden shield, chainmail armor (worn when disguised as a Norman soldier),

Weather Table

Because the weather can affect successful use of certain skills important to this adventure, try to keep track of such conditions. The following simplified system is provided should you wish to generate weather conditions "on the fly." Roll 1d6 at the start of each day and reference the table below. The result of the die roll determines the prevalent weather conditions. Subsequent die rolls can be modified depending on previous results.

Roll (1d6)	Prevalent Conditions
Less than 1	Bright, sunny day with few or no clouds in the sky.
1	Clear day, 25% cloud cover.
2	Moderately clear day, 50% cloud cover. Modify the next die roll by +1.
3	Moderately overcast, 75% cloud cover. Modify the next die roll by +2.
4	Overcast. Modify the next die roll by +3.
5	Miserable, drizzly day. Modify the next die roll by +3.
6	Rainy day. Modify the next die roll by +1.
Greater than 6	Downpour, 25% chance of thunder and lightning. Modify the next die roll by -2.

large wooden shield (carried only when disguised as a Norman soldier), open-faced helm, longsword, longbow with 20 arrows, three daggers, Norman soldier cloak, large sack, carpentry tools (chisel, hammer, drill, and bore), flint and steel, 100-ft.-long hemp rope.

Background: De Belame hired Brice as a carpenter. Later, Brice's larcenous nature caught the baron's eye, and he was placed in Justin's hands. Brice is no killer, being a simple craftsman at heart, and the rest of the outlaws consider him incompetent.

Brice's height makes him appear gangly, and his features are unremarkable.

Drogo, Human Male Bbn2: CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 2d12+6; hp 24; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft. (30 ft. in armor); AC 14 (+3 hide armor, +1 Dex); Atk +4/+0 melee (1d6+4/1d6+4, quarterstaff); or +3 ranged (no weapon carried); SA rage 1/day; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 4, Wis 8, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +5, Handle Animal +1, Intuit Direction +0, Jump +5, Swim +5. *Feats:* Power Attack, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Battling the Sherwood Bandits

SA—Rage (Ex): In a rage, Drogo temporarily gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saving throws. He suffers a -2 penalty to AC. The rage lasts 8 rounds, at the end of which Drogo is fatigued (-2 to Strength, -2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run).

Possessions: Hide armor, quarterstaff, iron manacle (worn around left wrist), chain belt.

Background: Drogo is a mute brute, a sideshow freak once associated with a group of touring entertainers. The continued abuse he received from them caused him to break free and escape into the wilderness where he lived as an animal. Justin happened upon the man a few years later and discovered that a little feigned kindness went a long way to winning Drogo's loyalty. Now, Drogo is Justin's loyal lap-dog, which causes the others of the group to give him a wide berth.

Drogo's mind is only barely capable of reasoned thought. He is a huge man with unkempt features, tangled hair, and a scruffy beard. Most striking are his intensely pale blue eyes.

Drogo uses his quarterstaff to make two attacks each round. When he rages, he makes only one attack each round and has a +6 melee attack modifier (instead of the usual +4/+0).

Tactics: If the PCs were spotted approaching the broch, allow the brigands a partial action before combat begins. Justin, Morgan, Drystan, and Brice take position near the top of the wall and draw their bows. Amice casts *cat's grace* on herself, followed by *resistance* if time permits. Drogo moves toward the east gap in the wall and stands guard.

The archers in the group are trained to direct their arrow fire at PCs and Norman soldiers who appear weakened or could be incapacitated by such an attack. Their strategy is to take down as many opponents as possible in as short a time as possible. The bandits continue to fire arrows for as long as possible, after which they drop their bows and draw forth their melee weapons, standing at the top of the broch's wall to gain a +1 melee attack bonus for higher ground. Drogo defends the entrance to the broch, keeping PCs and soldiers out of the compound. Amice casts her *chill touch* spell but tries to avoid melee confrontations.

If Morgan sees an opportunity, he uses his Move Silently and Hide skills to leave the broch, moving to flank the nearest foe. This enables him to use his sneak attack. Brice will not use sneak attacks unless presented with a blindingly obvious opportunity.

If things seem bleak for the outlaws, Amice casts *obscuring mist* about herself and withdraws into the forest, hoping to regroup with other fleeing outlaws.

The battle ends when all of the bandits have fled, surrendered, or died. Once this has happened, the PCs can explore the broch (described in area **7**). When they have finished their exploration, proceed to **Event 4**.

Development: If the PCs capture and interrogate one or more of the outlaws, they can uncover the outlaws' connection to Isambart de Belame. Brice and Drystan crumble under pressure, but Justin, Morgan, and Amice remain silent unless promised freedom. (Drogo is too stupid and violent to interrogate, and he has no valuable information to impart.) The outlaws reveal that they were hired by de Belame to attack settlements and wayward travelers. They know only that de Belame wants to humiliate the Sheriff of Nottingham in the eyes of Prince John. They don't realize that he plans to overthrow the Sheriff and seize Nottingham (although they are

not terribly surprised if this is revealed to them, for clearly de Belame is an ambitious visionary). Only Amice knows that de Belame is a necromancer; PCs need to charm her or use a *detect thoughts* spell to glean this fact.

Event 4. A Parting of Ways. If the PCs have not met John Carter and his patrol yet, the Normans appear at the broch while the PCs are exploring it (see **Event 3**).

PCs can interrogate captured outlaws or locate de Belame's letters in the broch. After discovering evidence that hints of de Belame's wider goal to usurp the Sheriff's position and claim Nottingham as his domain, Carter will speak to the PCs:

"It seems that Nottingham herself is in danger from this black animal. I must return to take this scum"—he indicates the captured outlaws—"to the dungeons, and warn the Sheriff! But that still leaves Isambart de Belame."

Carter turns to you, a concerned and questioning look upon his brow.

"Would you continue this alliance a little further? Castle de Belame lies to the northwest, too far for me to help my city and to deal with the dog. Remember that it is not just Nottingham this man threatens. If the city came under his control, the common folk would not have such an easy time of it. You might not like de Rainault's methods of governing the Shire, but I assure you that de Belame would be worse by tenfold. If you're willing, you have a chance to foil the baron's scheme. I do not deny that this might lead you to your deaths. All I need is a little time to raise a force from Nottingham to bring the baron to justice. If you do indeed care for the people of Sherwood, show it now!"

A successful Sense Motive skill check (DC 15) affirms Carter's sincerity. If the PCs agree to confront de Belame while Carter returns to Nottingham to warn the Sheriff, Carter offers to split his force in two, assigning one half to the PCs. (At full strength, this includes two foresters, one captain, and six soldiers.) He will instruct the foresters and the captains to support the PCs and any plan they devise: "Confronting the baron in his own castle might be a suicidal task, but I see no other way to protect the Sheriff and Nottingham." He then bids the PCs farewell and good fortune, and heads off with his men and any captives from the broch toward Nottingham. If the PCs decline, Carter attempts to arrest them as outlaws. If successful, he takes half his men back to Nottingham with the PCs plus any other captives and assigns the rest to scout Castle de Belame. If the PCs have any shred of honor, they should agree to Carter's proposal.

If the PCs are taken as prisoners to Nottingham, they become involved in the situation there. Refer to the "Adventures in Nottingham" sidebar for possible ideas of what might happen.

Once the PCs are on the road toward Castle de Belame, proceed with **Event 5**.

Event 5. Guy of Gisburn. The country over which the PCs must travel to reach Castle de Belame is comprised of rolling, grassy hills, dotted with trees, copses, and other patches of vegetation. As the PCs near the castle and enter the lowlands of the Pennines, the soft grass gives way to a hardier, coarser stock, with small outcroppings of lichen encrusted rock. All in all, however, the journey is relatively easy going. When the PCs are approximately midway through their journey, read or paraphrase the following:

The going has been easy thus far. The Normans have kept to themselves, following your group a short distance behind.

The unmistakable, dark forms of horsemen descend a hill toward you a quarter mile to the south. At the speed they are going, it will not take them long to arrive at your position.

The horsemen are Gisburn and his men. Since learning about the PCs from John Carter (see the "Adventures in Nottingham" sidebar), he has kept a lookout for them as he travels toward Castle de Belame. Abbot Hugo has sent Gisburn

Adventures in Nottingham

After leaving the PCs on the road in **Event 4**, John Carter and his troop of Norman soldiers and foresters encounter Sir Guy of Gisburn and his men. Unaware that Gisburn has betrayed the Sheriff of Nottingham and secretly pledged allegiance to Baron Isambart de Belame, John Carter informs Guy what he has learned in Sherwood Forest (pertaining to the evil outlaws). Gisburn simply bids Carter to hasten in his return to Nottingham before riding off toward Castle de Belame (eventually meeting the PCs in **Event 5**).

When Carter arrives at Nottingham, he finds de Belame's soldiery running the place under Roger of Doncaster. The Sheriff languishes in the dungeons of the castle, put there by John Lackland (Prince John) for his apparent incompetence in dealing with the outlaws of Sherwood.

Leaving his prisoners securely bound outside the town (if you want to use these NPCs in further adventures of your own devising, you can assume that some or all of the captives escape), Carter and his men sneak into Nottingham. Making use of the tunnels that twine beneath the city and Castle Hill, they make their way into the castle's dungeons, free the Sheriff and those loyal to him, and head into the castle proper to confront Sir Roger. Once the castle is secure, Carter and the Norman soldiery loyal to the Sheriff lead a running battle through the streets of Nottingham, driving out de Belame's men. Once this has been achieved, Carter then assembles a force to march on Castle de Belame, as he promised the PCs in **Event 4**. Because of the complications met in the city, this force arrives at the castle too late to help the PCs. Their arrival is dealt with in **Event 8**.

If the PCs were captured by Carter as a result of their refusal to confront Isambart de Belame, Carter attempts to recruit them into helping him restore the Sheriff's order to the city. The DM should create relevant encounters in this case, from the tunnels below Nottingham and the dungeons of the castle, to the encounter with Sir Roger and the subsequent battle. The poster map depicting Nottingham Castle is particularly useful in this case. In addition to the castle itself, the map depicts several key locations inside the castle. Perhaps the PCs must penetrate the castle using their own ingenuity, or perhaps they receive aid from Maid Marion or some other NPC. In any case, the success of the adventure in Nottingham should almost certainly hinge on them, and not NPCs such as John Carter.

to the castle as part of an agreement with de Belame but has also instructed Gisburn to obstruct the baron's schemes any way he can.

Sir Guy reaches the PCs' position in 10 rounds but will have the PCs in sight throughout except for the final 4 rounds, when the PCs will be blocked from his view (and vice versa) by a dip in the terrain. If the PCs wish to hide, this is the only time they can do so. The Normans accompanying the PCs, recognizing Gisburn, refuse to hide with the PCs. In fact, they await Gisburn's arrival and point out the PCs' location to him.

When Gisburn arrives, read or paraphrase the following:

> The twelve horsemen halt a short distance away, spread out in a line. They are all dressed in full armor, swords and lances slung to their saddles, but have made no aggressive moves save for the laying of gauntleted hands upon pommels. The lead horseman reins in his horse close to your group. "Ho!" he shouts, "Be you allies of John Carter?"

If the PCs answer to the positive, continue with:

> "Then I have something for you. Here!" The rider throws a black object to the ground. Turning his horse, he gestures for his men to move out. As they leave, the horseman shouts back at you: "The black-heart has an altar to a devil somewhere in the castle." He points to the object on the ground and says, "I've been told that this must be spilled on it."
>
> With a wave of his hand, he disperses the horsemen. It is not long before they disappear from your view.

The object Guy throws down is a small, black velvet bag. Its contents are described under **Treasure** below.

If the PCs start a fight, Guy orders his guards to retaliate while he rides toward Castle de Belame and out of harm's way. Sir Guy and his men fight only to defend themselves, and Gisburn attempts to stop the battle and parley throughout.

Creatures (EL 9): Statistics for Sir Guy are presented in the "Major Villains" sidebar. He is joined by eleven of his most loyal soldiers.

Norman Soldiers, Male Human War2 (11): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 16 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 shield); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword); or +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +3, Jump +1, Ride +4, Swim +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Toughness.

Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, light crossbow with 10 crossbow bolts, light lance.

Treasure: Within the velvet bag is a silver vial, stoppered in silver and sealed with beeswax. The vial contains blessed water from the font of St. Mary's in Nottingham. As Guy has hinted, this item will be useful to the PCs if they discover de Belame's dark altar (area **18h** within Castle de Belame). If splashed on any servant of darkness (Amice, de Belame, the baron's cultists, or the undead in de Belame's castle), it inflicts 2d4 points of damage, but there is only enough water in the vial for one such attack. Splashing the water on de Belame's altar will have the greatest effect.

Event 6. Castle de Belame. The castle lies 10 miles northwest of the bandit's broch and should take the PCs a little over 3 hours to reach on foot. The castle, perched atop a craggy cliff overlooking a narrow, stream-carrying valley, comes into view when the PCs arrive within 1 mile of the place.

Read or paraphrase the following passage when the PCs finally arrive at Castle de Belame:

> An afternoon storm begins to boil in the skies as you approach the castle of Baron Isambart de Belame. Perched atop a steep, crumbling crag, the dark walls of the place known in fear as Evil Hold glare down at you. A tonguelike path snakes up the cliff to the castle's main gate—a dark and ominous orifice.
>
> The sight of the castle almost overwhelms you for a moment, reaching to your heart with its foreboding grasp of despair. But you know, for the sake of all you hold true, you must approach. You take courage from the steel of your weapons, and perhaps mouth a silent prayer that you will see the sun rise over Sherwood Forest at least once more in this life. You walk forward into the castle's shadow.

See the "Encounters in Castle de Belame" section for a full description of the keep.

Event 7. Endgame. This event occurs after the PCs have defeated Isambart de Belame.

Carter's troop—a substantial force of Nottingham militia—arrives at Castle de Belame not long after the PCs overcome the baron. Now that Nottingham, Sherwood, and the county are safe once more, Carter no longer sees any need for a continued alliance with the PCs. However, he does possess a just sense of honor. Leaving the main body of his force to camp in the main courtyard, Carter approaches the keep with a personal contingent of foresters. If the PCs decide to bring de Belame out of his Incantestibule through the keep, Carter arrives in the main hall just as the characters are hauling the baron's sobbing form up the stairs. If the PCs approach Carter's force by any other means (for instance, they might have exited through the trapdoor in area **2b**, circumnavigating the castle's wall), Carter spurs his horse forward so that he might parley with the PCs before they get too close to his men. In any case, when Carter and the PCs meet, read or paraphrase the following:

> John Carter approaches you. "You have done well this day. I had thought to test my men in battle against these stones and counted you already victims of the baron's treachery, but here you stand!
>
> "I am bound by oath to king and liege to arrest you on charges against the laws of the Forest, but I am not inclined this day to hold myself to oaths of that nature. Go, flee. Your reward is freedom for one day longer. We shall meet again, and I suspect our next facing will not be so congenial. And worry not for the baron. He will not see daylight after dungeon afore you, even should it take me five years hence to track you down."

Carter insists on taking the captured baron into custody. Before placing the baron in the hands of the Sheriff's Norman soldiers, Carter addresses the PCs once more:

"Know that I do not account for every man in this troop from Nottingham, and most are the Sheriff's men. Dally, and I'll wager one of them will find reward for bringing you outlaws down."

Carter and the Norman soldiers camp at Castle de Belame for one night before heading back to Nottingham with their prize. If the PCs kill Isambart de Belame, Carter's reaction is no different, save that he insists on taking the baron's head back to Nottingham as a "present" for the Sheriff.

If he is still alive, Sir Guy of Gisburn presides over Castle de Belame until such a time as the Sheriff decides what to do with de Belame's holdings. If confronted with accusations of treachery and his apparent alliance with Baron de Belame, Guy is quick to point out his role in the baron's downfall (giving the vial of St. Mary's holy water to the PCs so that they might destroy de Belame's unholy altar and his source of power). Sir Guy avails himself of every opportunity to prove himself a loyal servant of Nottingham and Abbot Hugo. Should the PCs challenge his authority or mock him in any way, Guy calls upon John Carter and the Norman soldiers to deal with the insolent outlaws!

Encounters in Sherwood

For the following encounters, refer to the keyed wilderness map below.

1. A Death in the Woods. Refer to **Event 1**. Here the PCs discover the body of the slain forester, Hugo Farrow.

2. Burned Hamlet or Thorp. These sites show the locations of small settlements, mainly consisting of hovels fabricated from wood, straw, earth, and grass that have been destroyed by de Belame's outlaws. Use this encounter for other hamlets that are destroyed by the outlaws during the course of play.

Each burned settlement forms a grisly scene. The bodies of the former inhabitants lie as carrion, burned, blackened, and occasionally staked or skewered. The DM should paint scenes of wanton destruction each time the PCs visit such a location.

Searching these areas always reveals some item of Norman construction: a mailed gauntlet, a helm, a small weapon, and so forth. These objects have been left by Justin to incriminate Norman soldiers for the wicked deeds.

Characters searching the perimeter of the hamlet or thorp find tracks heading toward area 7. After laying waste to a community, the outlaws scatter to make their tracks harder to follow; they also take care to hide their tracks as they go. For these reasons, their trails are hard to follow. The base DC is 20, plus the following modifiers:

- +1 modifier for every 24 hours since the trail was made;
- +1 modifier per hour of rain since the trail was made;
- +6 modifier during an overcast or moonless night; or +3 modifier during a moonlit night.
- +3 modifier in fog or rain.

In any case, the trails vanish once a body of water (river or lake) is reached, and none of them leads directly to the outlaw's camp (area **7**). If the PCs successfully follow tracks leading from three different settlements, a successful Wisdom check or Intuit Direction skill check (DC 15) allows them to correctly triangulate the location of the outlaws' base.

3. Edwinstowe and Lidgett. Edwinstowe is a famous hamlet, for it is here that Robin and Marian reportedly married. The citizens of Edwinstowe are friendly and accommodating toward those outlaws of Sherwood Forest cut in the same cloth as Robin and his band. If the PCs need healing or supplies, the villagers are willing to provide such, within reason. If services are required that the villagers cannot provide (healing beyond the capabilities of the Heal skill or more specialized equipment beyond rations, arrows, and items of simple craft), they will direct the PCs to the friars of Rufford Abbey (area **4**). The villagers of other settlements do not provide aid but instead direct the PCs to Edwinstowe; folk here are too frightened of Norman reprisal to help outlaws themselves, but they are sympathetic to their cause.

DM's Map of Sherwood Forest

Both Edwinstowe and Lidgett have suffered recent raids by the evil outlaws, in the guise of Norman soldiers. Villagers here can provide general descriptions of their attackers, but they will not directly incriminate de Belame's brigands (although, when pieced together with other evidence, these descriptions might allow PCs to complete the jigsaw). The villagers have also heard rumors of vicious attacks on the nearby roads.

4. Rufford Abbey. This small settlement, surrounding and serving the Abbey proper, has been the subject of a particularly nasty raid by de Belame's outlaws, incited by Amice and her general loathing of the friars and their peaceful Christian ways. Although the evil outlaws donned their Norman disguises for the attack, the perceptive friars can provide a physical description of their attackers that matches the members of Justin's group. Additionally, the friars have recovered several arrows used in the attack; these match arrows found in burned hamlets and the one found by the PCs in **Event 1**.

Creatures (EL 0): The friars can only provide simple equipment resources, but among their ranks they have individuals who function as 4th-level clerics should the PCs need healing.

As a granted power, friars cast healing spells and spells from the Good domain as 5th-level clerics.

Typical Friar, Human Male Clr4: CR –; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 4d8; hp 24 each; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +3 melee (1d6, cudgel) or +3 ranged (1d4, sling); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills: Diplomacy +8, Heal +9, Knowledge (religion) +8. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Great Fortitude, Martial Weapon Proficiency.

Spells (5/4/3): 0—*create water* (×2), *mending, purify food and drink, virtue;* 1st—*bless* (×2), *divine favor* (×2); 2nd—*augury* (×2), *zone of truth*.

Domain spells (Good, Healing): 1st—*protection from evil;* 2nd—*cure moderate wounds*.

Possessions: Robe, cudgel (club), holy symbol, pouch of herbs, wineskin.

5. The Major Oak. A huge oak stands in an ancient clearing. It is here, so legend has it, that Robin and his men gathered. De Belame's bandits will not enter the region surrounding the Major Oak.

Good-aligned creatures that touch the tree receive the benefit of a *bless* spell for 3 hours. A creature can only benefit from this power once per day. Creatures who deface the Major Oak are cursed, suffering effects similar to the *bane* spell until a *remove curse* spell is cast or they atone for their vandalism.

6. Jordan Castle. The remains of an ancient, earthwork castle stand here. If you are running a more mystical Sherwood campaign, this location might serve as a meeting place with Herne (or another, similar patron figure). In such a campaign, this patron might provide the PCs with information regarding the current situation in Sherwood Forest, but only in a cryptic, riddlelike fashion.

Creature (EL 2): Some local farmers believe the castle is haunted because they've heard unearthly shrieks in the ruins. The first time the PCs explore the castle, they encounter a savage boar (the source of the shrieks).

Boar (1): CR 2; Medium-Size Animal (4 ft. tall); HD 3d8+9; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+6 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, bite); SA ferocity; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +5.

SA—Ferocity (Ex): The boar continues to fight without penalty even while disabled or dying; see "Injury and Death" in Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH*.

SQ—Scent (Ex): The boar can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

7. Broch of the Outlaws. Once the PCs find the broch, proceed with **Event 3**.

Constructed both for shelter and defense, brochs are round structures usually made of stone, with "rooms" built into the walls opening out onto a central courtyard. The bandit's broch is an earthen structure, built upon a slightly raised piece of land near the shore of a lake south of Clipstone.

Traps (EL = trap's CR): Brice, one of de Belame's outlaws, has rigged six different kinds of traps in the vicinity of the broch. These are indicated on the map as **T1-T6**.

T1: This is a 10-foot-deep pit spiked with wooden stakes. The walls of the pit are covered with a framework of flint shards. PCs who make a successful Search check (DC 15) or take 20 can remove the flint shards and climb out of the pit safely; otherwise, the PCs must make a successful Climb skill check (DC 15) or suffer 1d4 points of damage from the flint shards.

10-foot-deep Spiked Pit: CR 1; 1d6 points of damage plus 1d4 spike attacks (+11 melee) for 1d4+2 points of damage per successful hit; Reflex saving throw avoids (DC 20); Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 20).

T2: A tripwire is hitched to a pair of logs that swing down from the nearby trees when the trap is sprung, crashing into each other lengthways at the nadir of their paths.

Swinging Logs: CR 1; +5 melee (2d6 points of damage); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

T3: This trap consists of a loosely lashed 10-ft. × 40-ft. framework covering a shallow pit. The cross-poles of the framework grid have an interlocking network of shorter poles, each with a rock lashed to each end. Stepping on the network causes that entire section to swing upward, striking the victim's legs.

Covered Grave: CR 1/2; 1d6 points of damage; Reflex saving throw avoids (DC 20); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 22).

T4: This trap consists of a springy bush, young tree branch, or pole placed at throat height and laced with sharp flint shards. Pulling the tripwire causes the system to swing out and strike the victim. Characters of Small-size are missed automatically.

Throatcutter Bush: CR 1; +8 melee (2d6 points of damage); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

T5: This trap is a series of shallow, 6-inch-diameter pits bisected by a stout piece of wood held firmly in place. The trap is designed such that the victim's foot slips under the wood and bends backward as the character attempts to step forward.

Footbreaker: CR 1; 1d6 points of damage plus one-half speed reduction until the damage is healed; Reflex saving throw (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

T6: Two springy branches or poles have been bent back and attached to snares. Victims stepping into the snares cause the branches to whip upward in opposite directions, hauling the victim up by his legs which are violently pulled in different directions.

Wishbone Snare: CR 1; 2d6 points of damage plus 1d6 points of subdual damage; Reflex saving throw avoids (DC 25); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

7a-7f. Outlaws' Shelters. These rooms serve as the personal quarters of de Belame's outlaws. Within each room can be found any items not carried by the brigands (their Norman soldier uniforms, for example).

7a: Drystan's Room.

7b: Storeroom. Contains sacks of food and a few half-filled kegs of ale.

7c: Brice's Room.

7d: Justin's Room. PCs who make a successful Search skill check (DC 10) find a waxed leather pouch containing three letters possessing de Belame's seal. (Show players the letters on the next page.) The letters incriminate Baron Isambart de Belame in the activities of the outlaws and hint something of the current events within Nottingham. If presented with the letters, Carter takes the information presented by the letters as damning evidence of the baron's treachery.

7e: Morgan's Room.

7f: Amice's Room.

Drogo does not have a room of his own; he sleeps outside the entrance to Justin's chamber.

8. Cliff. The cliff leading down to the lake is roughly 20 feet high. Its lower extents are rocky, but this gives way to soil about a third of the way up. Roots and rock outcroppings provide an abundance of handholds; a successful Climb skill check (DC 5) is required to scale the cliff. If the PCs can somehow navigate their way across the lake without being noticed by the outlaws at area **7**, the cliff provides excellent cover from the broch, and individuals can easily slip into the undergrowth once they reach its summit.

9. Lake and Sunken Boat. The relatively small lake south of Clipstone presents an effective defense for de Belame's outlaws. From the raised position of the broch (area **7**), the outlaws can practically see across the entire lake.

The outlaws have a boat, which they sink after use to prevent it from being discovered. To sink the boat, they simply turn it over, fill it with water, and weigh it (and the oars) down with rocks. It requires 15 minutes to haul up the boat and bail it for use. Finding the boat requires a successful Search skill check (DC 15). The boat can hold six individuals plus their equipment.

Castle de Belame

The challenges awaiting the PCs in this section of the adventure are threefold: getting into the castle in the first place, hunting down the baron while avoiding or facing his minions, and the final confrontation.

Inhabitants of the Castle

In addition to Baron Isambart de Belame, the following individuals are also present within the castle:

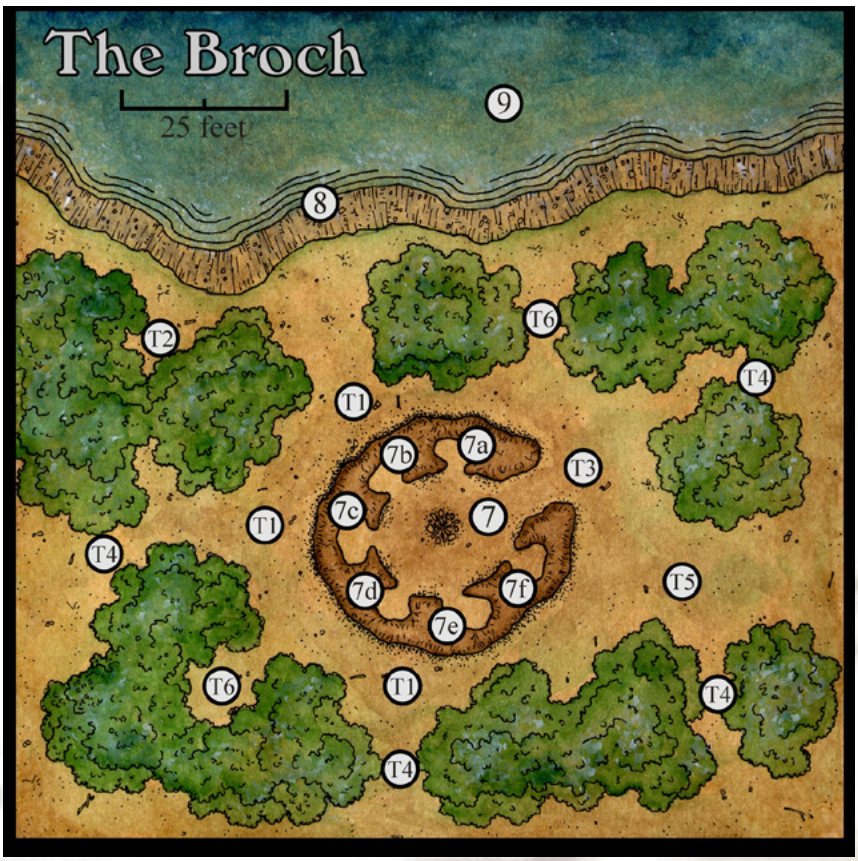
De Belame's Guards: The castle's normal complement of troops is considerably down, since many have been sent to help Sir Roger of Doncaster secure Nottingham Castle. A total of thirty soldiers and two captains remain.

Norman Captains, Male Human War3 (2): CR 3; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 3d8+3; hp 20 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 shield); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword); or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +5, Jump +3, Ride +4, Swim +3. *Feats:* Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, light crossbow with 10 crossbow bolts.

Norman Soldiers, Male Human War1 (30): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 1d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 9 each; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 shield); Atk +1 melee (1d8/crit 19-20, longsword); or +1 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.



Skills: Climb +2, Jump +1, Ride +3, Swim +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Toughness.

Possessions: Chainmail armor, small wooden shield, open-faced helm, longsword, light crossbow with 10 crossbow bolts.

Sir Guy and His Retinue: If they were not defeated in **Event 5**, Sir Guy and his soldiers are guarding the castle's Inner Ward. (Sir Guy can be found in area **14**. His guards patrol the courtyard surrounding area **17**.) Guy and his men do not threaten the PCs, although they might act aggressively in the presence of individuals loyal to de Belame. Given the chance, Guy provides some (limited) help, such as a nod or gesture in the right direction. He can also distract a group of guards long enough to allow the PCs to sneak past.

Cultists: These are the personal servants of de Belame who share his dark beliefs. These six cultists are normally found in area **18h**.

Evil Outlaws: Members of Justin's band (see **Event 3**) who managed to flee to the castle are present. If Amice is here, she accompanies the baron. Others station themselves accordingly to defend the castle. Note that if Justin escaped but Amice did not, he will be one of the zombies present in the dungeons (area **18c**). If Drogo survived but Justin did not, Drogo flees into the wilderness and is not encountered at the castle.

Zombies: De Belame keeps a stock of zombies, animated from the remains of prisoners he has either sacrificed or tortured to death, in the dungeons. He also keeps four zombies near him at all times as bodyguards.

Getting Into the Castle

There are several methods of gaining entry into the castle. The walls can be scaled with a successful Climb skill check, but that invites attacks from guards standing atop the walls (areas **4** and **13**). The difficulty of the climb depends on what equipment, if any, the PCs use; see the Climb skill description for details. PCs scaling the wall without a knotted rope or similar aid must make a difficult Climb check (DC 23).

PCs who approach the outer gatehouse (area **3**) are rebuffed by the guards stationed there. If the PCs attack the guards or try to break down the main gate, the guards sound the alarm. The guards use the castle's battlements and arrow slits for cover as they pepper the PCs with arrows.

PCs might also find the secret trapdoor located within the stone circle close to the castle (area **2b**).

PCs might try to divide their force, one group creating a running diversion while the other group scales the castle walls or otherwise gains entry. If the PCs are accompanied by Norman soldiers (see **Event 4**), the soldiers suggest such tactics if the PCs are having trouble devising a plan of their own.

Finding the Baron

As the DM, you are free to run the actions of the guards and evil outlaws as you see fit, bearing in mind that their primary goal is to stop the PCs from entering the main keep (area **17**) and threatening de Belame.

If the PCs are accompanied by soldiers loyal to John Carter, the soldiers agree to "hold the castle" while the PCs explore the main keep. The soldiers do not accompany the PCs into de Belame's dark stronghold unless the PCs employ magic (such as *charm person*) or diplomacy. Persuading the soldiers to accompany the PCs inside de Belame's keep requires a successful Diplomacy or Intimidate skill check (DC 25). The guards

Justin's Letters

Justin,
The time has come to gather your compatriots in Sherwood. The Regent's visit is imminent, and I want to ensure your tasks are having an effect before he arrives in Nottingham.

Remember, your primary concern is to raise the profile of the outlaw problem. Temper your treatment of the pathetic peasantry. Try to keep my ward safe, and keep that animal of yours under control.

De Belar

Justin,
Your activities are having a glorious effect in Nottingham. Merchants are, even now, clamoring for the head of our dear Sheriff, and all is in place for John's arrival.

I am hearing that you have ignored my advice concerning the peasantry, but no matter. Have your fun, as long as you remember why I am paying you. Remember to keep my ward safe. Should anything happen to her, I will kill you with my own hands.

De Belame

Justin,
All has gone better than I had hoped. The Regent has arrived and needed little prompting from me before flying into one of his rages against de Rainault. It is just a matter of time now. You have done well. All you must do now is ensure the safe return of my ward. If one hair on her head is damaged, you shall pay a thousandfold.

De Belame

can be persuaded to help break down the doors or lift the portcullises that bar entry into the keep, but even this requires a Diplomacy or Intimidate skill check (DC 15).

When the PCs first reach the keep, Baron de Belame is lurking in area **17g**. If Amice survived the encounter at the broch and escaped, she is with him. Standing about the room are de Belame's four zombie guards. As soon as the PCs enter the main keep, de Belame (with Amice and his undead guards) heads into area **17h** and climbs the stairs to the third floor. He enters his bedchamber (area **17l**) and fetches his spellbook and a bag of caltrops. He then crosses the chapel (area **17m**), opens the secret door there, descends the stairs to area **17f**, and climbs down through the trapdoor in the floor. Once in the dungeons, he proceeds to the Incantestibule (area **18f**) to make his final stand. As much as possible, he tries to throw the PCs off his trail, through the use of magic and secret passages. He might even order Amice or his zombies to hold up the PCs. To further hamper their progress, he liberally scatters caltrops over stairs and along corridors. (PCs must spend a full round clearing a 5-foot-square stretch of caltrops or suffer 1d4 points of damage crossing the trapped area.) Only when he reaches the Incantestibule will the baron turn to face his foes.

Castle Features

Unless otherwise noted, the following features are common throughout the castle and the main keep.

Walls: All walls are fairly smooth but can be climbed with a successful Climb skill check (DC 23).

Doors: Normal doors are built of studded oak reinforced with iron. Doors typically open into rooms; a door that connects two rooms opens into the larger room. Although doors inside the main keep aren't usually locked, de Belame carries a master key that can lock and unlock every door in the castle.

Iron-reinforced Oak Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 18.

Secret Doors: Secret doors require a successful Search skill check (DC 20) to locate and open by simply pushing the "wall" inward.

Lighting: No area is lit; the inhabitants of the castle carry their own torches if they need such. Rooms within the keep are shrouded in darkness, unless they contain arrow slits that let in thin streamers of grayish light. All arrow slits within the wall towers, gatehouses, and main keep have wooden shutters used to block out drafts and light when needed.

Encounters in the Castle

1. Trail. The trail consists of earth packed over a natural route leading up the cliff face, with large, flat stones sunk into it to provide some stability. The inclination of the trail is not too steep, as it winds from left to right as it progresses upward. The entire trail can be viewed from the gatehouse (area **3**), and individuals on the trail are subject to arrow fire from that location. Individuals on the walls (area **4**) are not able to fire at travelers on the trail.

2. Outside the Castle. The terrain outside the castle consists of long, coarse grassland covering soft, peatlike earth. Lichen-covered rock outcroppings dot the landscape. There are two areas of interest outside the castle, described under area **2a** and **2b** below.

2a. Cliff. The cliff is 30 feet tall and relatively easy to climb (DC 15). However, any fall from the cliff triggers a shower of rocks dealing an additional 1d6 points of damage.

Guards on the walls and gatehouse cannot see or attack individuals climbing the cliff.

2b. Stone Circle. This stone circle is of ancient origin. Seven 8-foot-tall, tapering menhirs form the circle, all weather-worn and lichen-covered. PCs of good alignment feel uncomfortable while standing within the circle and must make a successful Will saving throw (DC 15) or suffer the effects of a *bane* spell for as long as they remain in the circle. Casting a *detect magic* spell on the circle of stones reveals a trace of Enchantment (Compulsion) magic.

At the edge of the circle, a secret trapdoor has been well hidden (DC 22 to locate). The trapdoor is locked and barred. Opening it reveals a wooden ladder leading down 20 feet to the Incantestibule (area **18f**).

Locked and Barred Trapdoor: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 25.

Watching over the secret trapdoor is Baron de Belame's toad familiar; see **Creature** below.

Creature (EL 0): De Belame's toad familiar, Wart, spends most of its days and nights catching flies in the circle of stones. When the PCs first explore the circle, Wart is sitting atop a stone about 10 feet from the trapdoor, hidden by the tall grass. PCs are entitled to a Spot skill check (opposed by its Hide skill check) to notice the rather nondescript toad.

Wart, Toad Familiar: CR 1/10; Diminutive Animal (6 in. long); HD special (treated as a 6-HD creature); hp 9; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 5 ft.; AC 18 (+4 size, +1 Dex, +3 natural); Atk —; Face 1 ft. × 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ familiar abilities; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 1, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills: Hide +21, Listen +5, Spot +5.

SQ—Familiar Abilities (Ex): Wart has special abilities and imparts abilities to its master. These abilities are: Alertness, Improved Evasion, share spells, empathic link, touch, and speak with master. See Table 3-19 in the *PH* for details.

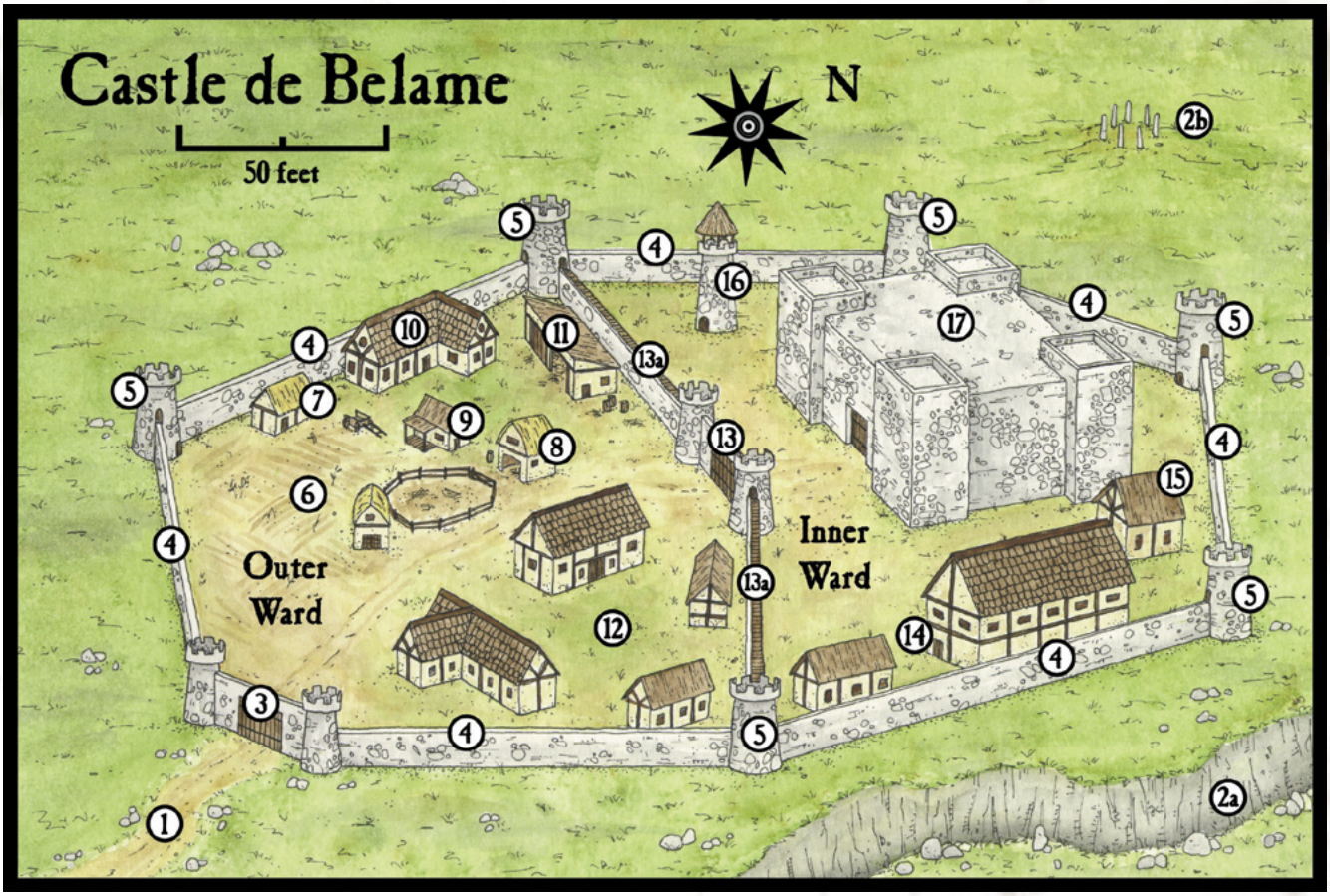
Development: Because de Belame shares an empathic link with Wart, he becomes aware the instant strangers enter the circle of stones. Fearing that the interlopers might find the hidden trapdoor, de Belame goes to the Incantestibule.

3. Outer Gatehouse. The outer gatehouse consists of two 20-foot-tall towers connected by a 15-foot-high wall. Set into the gatehouse wall is a pair of reinforced oak doors barred from within. There is neither a drawbridge nor a portcullis. Anyone attacking the gate is subject to attacks from the adjacent towers and the top of the gate wall (area **4**).

From the inside, the gate is opened by a lever mechanism that both unbars the massive doors and heaves them open. The lever can be operated by a single character but requires a successful Strength check (DC 10) to operate. The gate can be opened manually, but the bar mechanism requires a successful Strength check (DC 20) to lift and the doors require a separate Strength check (DC 25) to push open.

Gatehouse Doors: 4 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 80; Break DC 40.

Creatures (EL 5): There are six guards and a captain stationed in the towers.



4. Outer Walls. The outer walls are only 12 feet tall but not particularly easy to climb (DC 23). Any character scaling a wall is subject to attacks from the guards standing atop the same wall section.

Creatures (EL 1 per wall section): There are two guards stationed atop each wall section, fourteen in total.

5. Wall Towers. Each wall tower stands 30 feet tall and consists of three stories connected by a stone, spiral staircase. Entrance to the towers can be gained through doors opening onto the courtyard and from the second floor (from the tops of connecting walls). A ladder leads up from the third floor to a trapdoor that allows access to the tower's roof. Currently the towers are unoccupied.

6. Castle Farm. The farm consists of a crop field, in which sickly and weak root vegetables and wheat grow. Nearby stands an empty corral and a thatched barn. The barn contains normal farming equipment (plowshares, hoes, and so forth).

7. Carpenter. This thatched building is Brice's home. Inside, the PCs can find woodworking tools as well as workbenches and various items either under repair or manufacture.

8. Storage Barn. The thatched barn serves as a storage area for the raw materials required by the castle's craftsmen. Metal ingots, wood, poles, cartwheels, and numerous other mundane items can be found here.

9. Blacksmith. This stone building is cluttered with the tools of the blacksmith trade and dominated by a forge and anvil. Various metal constructs can be found here—complete, part-finished, or under repair. Cooperage rings, horseshoes, sword blades, and so forth litter workbenches and adorn hooks set into the walls.

10. Storage and Workers' Quarters. This building consists of two rooms: a large common sleeping quarter for the menial workers of the castle, and an aerated storage chamber for items sensitive to the elements (seasoned wood, foodstuffs, and so forth).

11. Stables. Twelve horses belonging to Guy and his men currently occupy the stables. The stables also contain the living quarters and office of the stablemaster, Corey (Com1; hp 3).

If you are running a more fantastical Sherwood campaign, this building might also contain the baron's prized mount: a disagreeable hippogriff.

Creature (EL 2): The hippogriff is kept apart from the horses and has not been domesticated. A PC who makes a successful Animal Empathy skill check can affect the demeanor of the beast; use the "NPC Attitudes" sidebar in this adventure to determine the DC, and treat the hippogriff as "hostile." PCs who alter the hippogriff's attitude to "indifferent" or better can ride the mount; PCs riding the hippogriff bareback suffer a -5 circumstance penalty to all Ride skill checks.

Hippogriff (1): CR 2; Large Beast (9 ft. long); HD 3d10+9; hp 25; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft., fly 100 ft. (average); AC 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d4+4 [×2], claws), +0 melee (1d8+2, bite); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; AL N; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +4, Spot +7 (+11 during daylight hours).

12. Outer Garrison Buildings. When the castle has its full complement of soldiers, these buildings house around one hundred men. The smaller of the southernmost buildings functions as a storehouse and armory and contains dozens of longswords, spears, light crossbows, crossbow bolts, large and small wooden shields, and open-faced helms.

13. Inner Gate. This gate is identical to the outer gate (area **3**).

Creatures (EL 5): Six guards and a captain are stationed here.

13a. Inner Curtain Walls. The inner walls stand only 10 feet tall, but they are just as hard to climb as the outer walls (DC 23).

Creatures (EL 1 per curtain wall): Two guards stand atop each curtain wall, four in total.

14. Inner Garrison Buildings. These buildings normally house the fifty men assigned to guard the inner ward from attackers. They currently house Sir Guy and his retinue. If the castle is attacked, Sir Guy orders half his men to take positions on the walls (areas **4** and **13a**). The other half remain with him as personal guards.

The smaller of the two buildings is a store and armory, similar to that in the outer ward (area **12**).

15. Henchmen's Quarters. This unremarkable building serves as home to henchmen in de Belame's employ, including the evil outlaws (other than Brice, who sleeps in area **7**, and Amice, who sleeps in area **16**).

Treasure: PCs who search the nine rooms of this building find 1d10 sp and 2d10 cp in each chamber.

16. Amice's Tower. This three-story structure was specially built for de Belame's ward, Amice. The first two stories consist of living space; the topmost story contains Amice's personal altar and bedroom.

Treasure: Hidden in Amice's bedchamber are two arcane scrolls (*detect secret doors* and *ray of enfeeblement*). Finding them requires a successful Search skill check (DC 20).

17. Main Keep. The keep stands three stories tall. The ground floor is dominated by the main hall. The second floor contains communal rooms for the keep's inhabitants. Private suites are located on the third floor.

17a. Entry Hall. The entry hall is protected by two iron portcullises. These are operated by windlasses in the guard rooms immediately left and right of the hall, with the outer gate being operated by the right-hand windlass and the inner gate being operated by the left-hand windlass. The gates can be lifted with a successful Strength check (DC 25). At either end of the hall, heavy oaken doors bar entry and egress. These doors are currently barred from the inside.

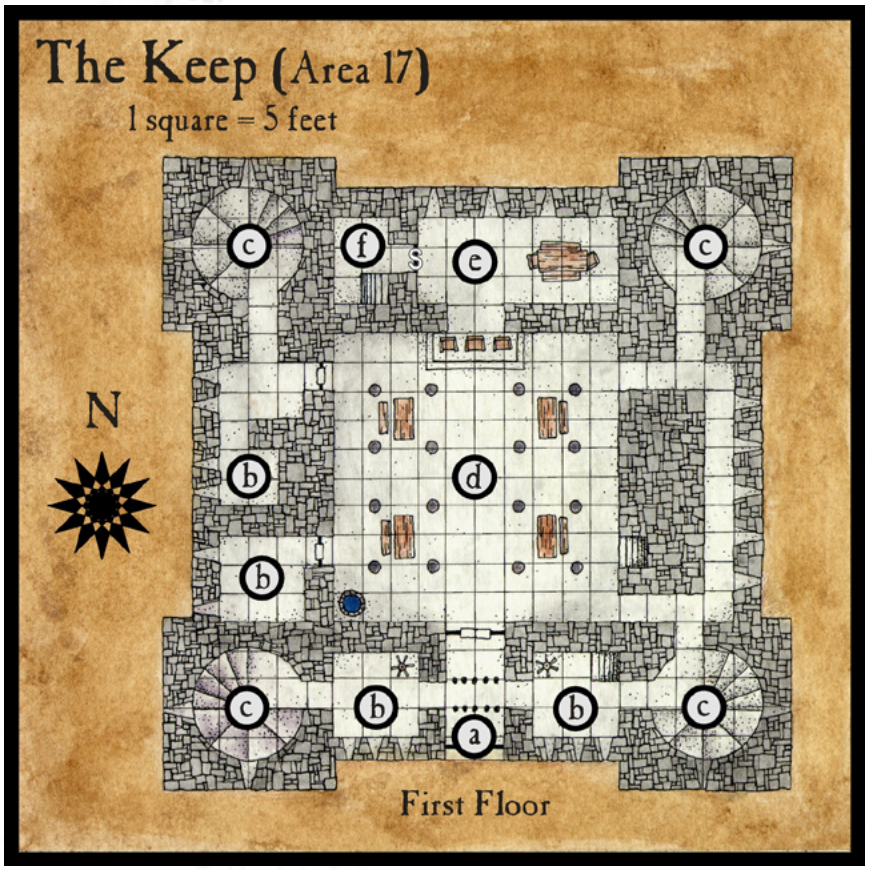
Iron Portcullis: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Lift DC 25.

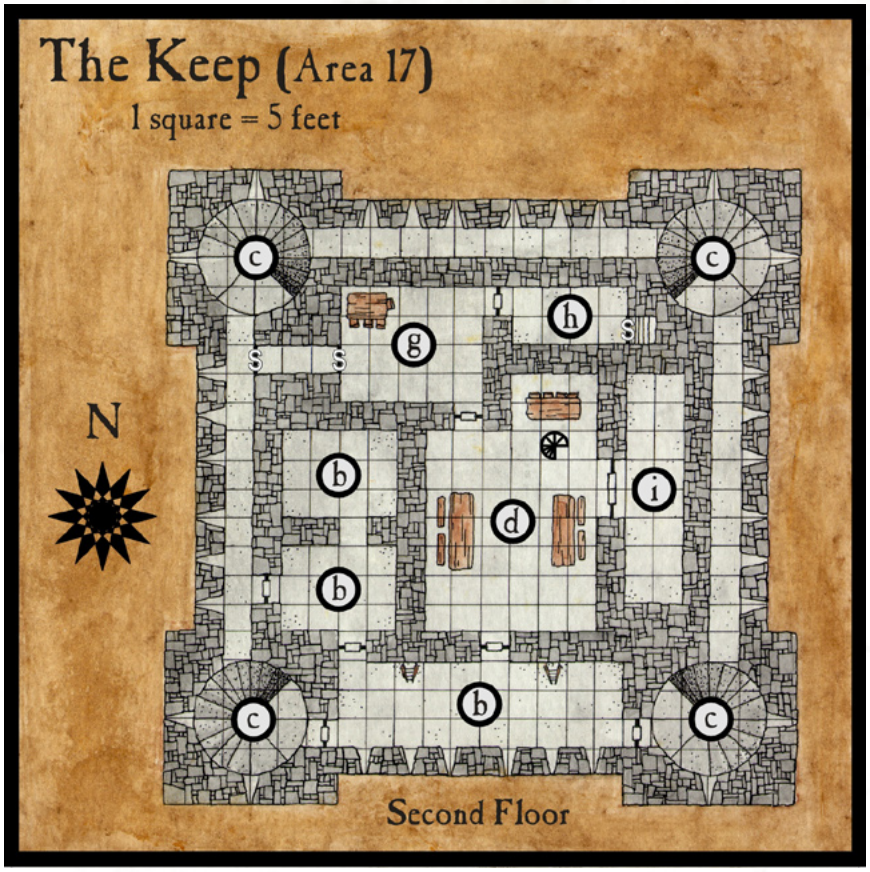
Barred Oak Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 30; Break DC 25.

17b. Guard Rooms and Armories. These locations serve as armories, quarters, and storerooms for the keep's contingent of soldiers, all of whom have been sent to help Sir Roger of Doncaster secure Nottingham Castle. These areas are currently unoccupied. Within each room, the PCs can find barrels of crossbow bolts and shortbow arrows, as well as the odd sword or spear.

17c. Tower Staircases. These broad, stone, spiral staircases connect every level of the castle, finally ending at an unlocked trapdoor opening out onto the roof.

17d. Main Hall and Upper Hall. These areas are used by Isambart de Belame for audiences and entertainment. The lower main hall is used for most such events, while the upper hall is reserved for especially debauched proceedings.





The main hall is large and shadowy. Even when torches are lit, the stone pillars that support the ceiling bathe the room in a flickering patchwork of dark and light. Tables and benches stand among the pillars. At the north end of the hall, three wooden thrones stand on a raised section reached by two steps. Behind the thrones, a break in the wall leads to area **17e**.

In one corner of the main hall stands a well, mounted to which is a squeaky iron winch with a wooden bucket. The well is 50 feet deep and contains brackish but drinkable water.

The upper hall is smaller. Again, benches and tables stand about the place, with a more ornate table seating four on thronelike chairs.

Creatures (EL 4 for zombies, EL 3 for ghouls): Eight zombies lurk within the pillared shadows of the main hall and attack anyone approaching area **17e**. Three ghouls have made the upper hall their home; two of them hide under the tables, while the third hides behind one of the thronelike chairs.

Human Zombies (8): CR 1/2; Medium-Size Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 2d12+3 (includes the Toughness feat); hp 16 each; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SQ undead, partial actions only; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3.

Feat: Toughness.

SQ—Undead: Zombies are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

SQ—Partial Actions Only (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but not both in the same round.

Ghouls (3): CR 1; Medium-Size Undead (5 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 13 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1 and paralysis, bite), +0 melee (1d3 [x2] and paralysis, claws); SA paralysis, create spawn; SQ undead; AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7. *Feats:* Multi-attack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA—Paralysis (Ex): Those hit by a ghoul's claw or bite attack must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or be paralyzed for 1d6+2 minutes. Elves are immune to this paralysis.

SA—Create Spawn (Su): PCs killed by the ghouls are left to rot for 1d4 days, after which time they rise as ghouls under de Belame's control. Casting a *bless* spell on the body before the end of that time averts the transformation.

SQ—Undead: As zombies above.

Tactics: While the zombies exhibit no combat tactics, the ghouls use their Hide skills to remain unseen, hoping to catch their prey by surprise. If the PCs flee from the ghouls, the ghouls hunt them down, using their Hide and Move Silently skills to move throughout the castle and catch the PCs off guard. PCs who are paralyzed by the ghouls are dragged away to some dark corner of the castle, killed, and left to rot until they rise as ghouls.

17e. Audience Hall. This room is used by the baron to hold meetings with his subordinate nobles to plan the running of the small barony. It is drafty here, as the arrow slits in the outer wall have no shutters or other guards against intrusive weather. The furniture here is sparse and functional, with the exception of the chair standing at the west end of the table. This chair seats de Belame during meetings and is exotically carved with Middle-Eastern designs. To the west, a secret door opens into area **17f**.

17f. Secret Entry. This hidden chamber contains a staircase leading up to de Belame's altar room on the third floor (area **17m**) and a concealed trapdoor leading down into the tunnel connecting the dungeon (area **18e**). The trapdoor is hidden beneath a rug.

17g. Private Audience Hall. This room is used for meetings of a sensitive nature. here the baron confers with his cultists or select operatives such as Justin and Amice. The furniture here consists of a table tucked into the northwest corner, surrounded by functional (and probably uncomfortable) chairs, and a black oak bookcase lining the south and west walls. A portion of the bookcase swings aside to allow access to the staircase leading to the secret room below. All of the books here are of an innocent nature: tax logs, land deeds, and so on.

Part of the wall to the west is thin, and easily pulled into the room revealing a secret passageway leading to the corridor that connects the stairwells of the four towers.

Creatures (EL 6 if the baron is here): Baron Isambart de Belame is here when the PCs first arrive at the keep. Once he detects intruders, he flees through the secret door. See the "Finding the Baron" section for more details.

17h. Office. This office is where de Belame does most of the administrative work required of him by his title and position. A fairly large writing desk stands here, complete with ink dish and quill. To the side of the desk stands a low, black oak bookcase. The books and papers here are of a generally innocent nature.

17i. Kitchen. This room is used to prepare food for the keep's inhabitants. The hearth is built into the north wall, where channels cut into the stone carry smoke from the fire into the corridor connecting the two easterly towers of this floor (and then, via the arrow slits there, to the outside). A large preparation table dominates the room, with barrels and sacks of grain and other foodstuffs lying scattered over its southern extents. The food here is of generally poor quality.

17j. Servants' Quarters. This dirty, ill-kept room houses the general servants of the keep, such as cooks and serving wenches. None are present now, having either fled or been sent to Nottingham. The floor is littered with frayed blankets and straw mattresses and pillows.

17k. Private Quarters. Copious amounts of blood stain the sheets of the beds, but no bodies can be found. Once, these rooms were the private chambers of de Belame's more important personnel (including the keep's castellan and majordomo). De Belame suspected that they were plotting against him and decided that they would better serve him as zombie bodyguards.

17l. De Belame's Bedchamber. This room is more opulent than any other in the keep. A locked wooden chest rests against one wall. The chest contains the **Treasure** and is rigged with a **Trap**. De Belame carries the only key to the chest.

Trap (EL 1): The locked wooden chest is trapped with a simple poison needle mechanism. The needle itself is coated with huge spider venom. A character stung by the needle must succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13) or take 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage; after 1 minute passes, the PC must succeed at another saving throw (same DC) or take 1d6 additional points of temporary Strength damage.

Poisoned Needle: CR 1; Fortitude save negates (DC 13; 1d4 Str/1d6 Str); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: The wooden chest contains papers outlining the baron's plans, as well as his personal diary. The diary, although pretty much worthless at this late stage, makes an interesting read and reveals certain aspects of the relationship between Amice and de Belame that might disturb those of sensitive mind. In addition to these notes, the chest contains a sack of 650 gp, two *potions* (*charisma* and *detect thoughts*), and Isambart's spellbook. The book is bound in black leather and contains the following arcane spells:

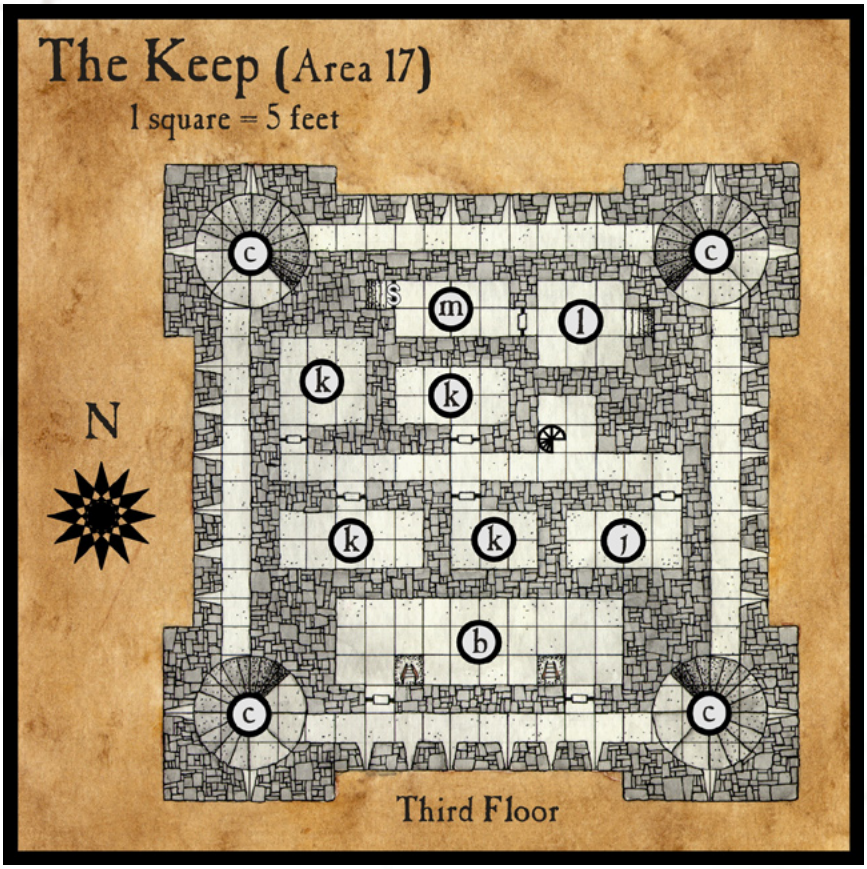
0—*dancing lights, detect magic, disrupt undead, ghost sound, mage hand, read magic.*

1st—*chill touch, comprehend languages, detect secret doors, expeditious retreat, obscurement, shield, summon monster I, true strike.*

2nd—*cat's grace, darkvision, detect thoughts, endurance, ghoul touch, scare, spectral hand, whispering wind.*

3rd—*dispel magic, gentle repose, halt undead, keen edge, suggestion, tongues, vampiric touch.*

17m. Private Chapel. This chamber contains de Belame's private altar to his dark god. A towering statue depicts the goat-headed visage of this entity, glaring over the blasphemously etched altar that stands in front of it. Alternating red and black drapes hang on the walls here, obscuring both the secret door and staircase down to area **17f**. Good-aligned PCs approaching within 5 feet of the altar feel mildly uncomfortable. If the vial given to the PCs by Gisburn is brought out, the PC holding it gets the feeling that this is not the altar upon which the vial's contents should be poured. The PC does not know why or where this feeling is coming from. In fact, it is entirely possible



that the PC might mistake the feeling as a defensive measure of the altar itself. Pouring the contents of the vial onto this altar has no adverse effect.

18. Below Castle de Belame. The dungeons below Castle de Belame have been carved out of the rock. The whole area is dank and dismal. Water drips from the ceilings and collects on the uneven floor. Grey-green growths of algae drip from the corners of the rooms and passages. The smell of rotting timber and flesh permeates the area. Few who have had the misfortune to be incarcerated here have ever left alive. De Belame has rarely seen fit to feed or otherwise care for his prisoners; those who amuse him are either tortured to death (in area **18d**) or sacrificed to the baron's dark god.

18a. Stairs. These staircases, carved from the bedrock, are slippery with algae and water. PCs who attempt to run down the stairs must make a successful Dexterity check (DC 12) to avoid slipping and tumbling into the dungeon area, taking 2d6 points of damage.

18b. Cells. Each of these filthy, barred chambers is empty of furniture and occupants. The baron has not furnished his prison with any form of bedding or latrine facilities. Stains from the previous occupants' last days cover the walls and floor.

Development: If de Belame is chased into the dungeons, he unlocks the door to area **18c** and orders the zombies within to fill the hallway connecting the cells, attacking all interlopers.

18c. Common Jail. This open cell is used to hold de Belame's stock of zombie slaves. Ten zombies inhabit the room.

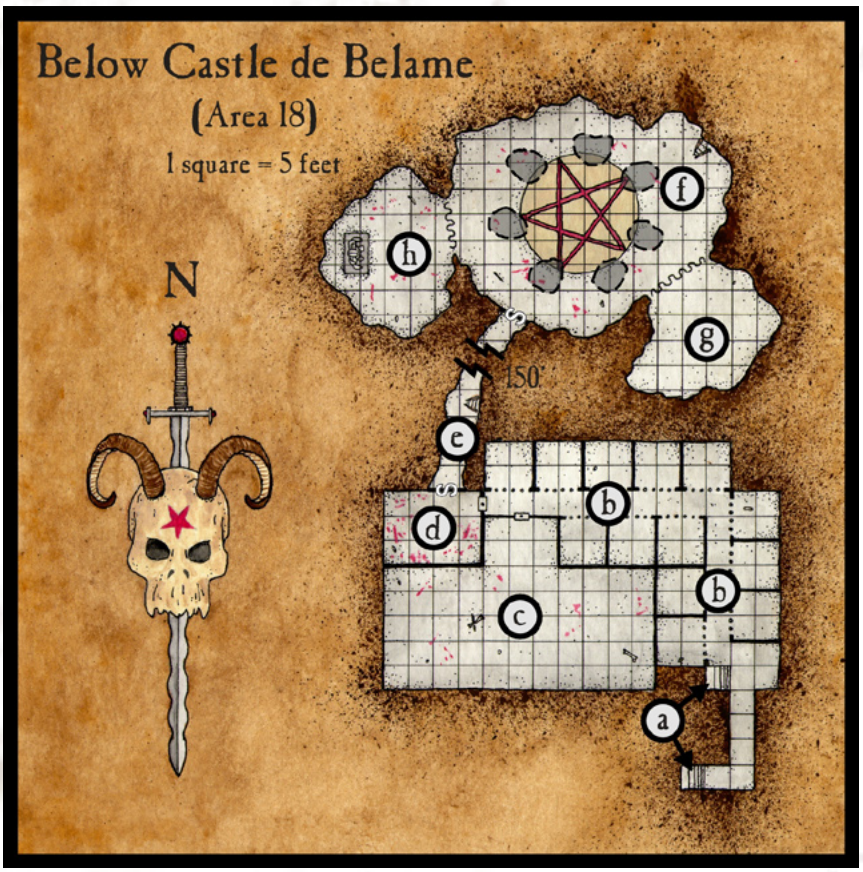
Creatures (EL 5): The zombies do not attack anyone entering the room unless they have been previously ordered to by the baron. If he has time, de Belame unlocks the door to this room and instructs the zombies to attack anyone entering the dungeons. If this has happened, the zombies are encountered wandering the dungeon corridor and the common jail, and they attack on sight. If not, the zombies are shuffling aimlessly around this room. If the door to the jail is left open, the zombies wander out into the corridor and through any open door they happen to come across. They will not climb the stairs, however.

If Justin returned to the castle without Amice, PCs might recognize one of the zombies as the unlucky brigand.

Human Zombies (10): hp 16 each; see area **17d** for complete statistics.

18d. Torture Chamber. A rack and an iron maiden dominate this room. Blood covers the floor and walls, and small body parts can be seen decomposing in the corners. Set into one wall is a secret door opening into a natural passage (area **18e**). The secret door is not as well hidden as most in the castle and can be detected with a successful Search check (DC 15).

18e. Tunnel and Trapdoor. Compared to the dungeon, this tunnel is relatively dry and not as odorous. Just inside the secret door (which is not disguised from the tunnel side) stands an iron-reinforced wooden ladder. The ladder leads up to the secret trapdoor in area **17f**. The tunnel continues for about 150 feet before ending at another secret door (which, again, is not disguised from the tunnel side). This secret door is similar to others in the keep and is harder to find than the one in area **18d** (DC 18).



18f. Incantestibule. This area lies directly underneath the circle of stones north of Evil Hold (area **2b**). Isambart de Belame makes his final stand here. If Amice is present, she positions herself around the lip in the natural wall of the cavern, just to the right of (and out of sight from) the secret door. She attempts to remain hidden (using her Hide skill) until the PCs are within the room, hoping to use her sneak attack against them.

If de Belame is present and has had time to cast his *obscuring mist* spell, read or paraphrase the following:

> This room is thick with mist, reducing visibility to no more than a few feet. From somewhere ahead of you, a deep, commanding voice speaks out. "So, you have finally caught me. Welcome to the Incantestibule. Here, you will die."

The entire Incantestibule is affected by the equivalent of a *desecrate* spell;

however, this is not a magical effect and cannot be dispelled using a *dispel magic*. Only by destroying the altar in area **18h** can the *desecrate* effect be lifted. So long as the effect persists, all Charisma checks made to turn undead within this room suffer a -3 unholy penalty. De Belame's four zombie bodyguards gain a +1 unholy bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws.

Using blood from tortured prisoners, de Belame's cultists have neatly painted a large pentagram on the Incantestibule floor. At each corner of the pentagram stands a tall iron brazier containing foul-smelling incense. The braziers radiate faint Abjuration magic if a *detect magic* spell is cast. So long as they remain erect, the entire circle containing the pentagram is protected by a *magic circle against good* spell, affording de Belame and all allies standing within the circle a +2 deflection bonus to AC and a +2 resistance bonus on all saving throws. Both these bonuses apply to attacks made by good creatures. See the *protection from good* spell description for other effects. The *magic circle* can be dispelled by casting a *dispel magic* on the area or knocking over all five braziers. (Knocking over a brazier is an attack-equivalent action.)

Isambart's *obscuring mist* spell completely conceals the pentagram (as well as the 10-foot-wide ring around the magic circle) and rises to meet the 20-foot-high ceiling. It persists for 6 minutes and cannot be dispelled once created.

The baron also tries to cast the following spells in preparation for this battle: *cat's grace* (on himself; lasts 6 hours), *shield* (lasts 6 minutes), and *chill touch* (good for 6 attacks). Amice, if present, casts *cat's grace* (lasts 1 hour) and *resistance* (lasts 1 minute) on herself before the battle.

The immediate threat to the PCs is not from de Belame himself, but from the four zombie servants he has taken with him. As the PCs enter the room, shortly after de Belame has delivered his speech, the zombies shamble out of the mist. Amice waits until the zombies are in melee before attacking, hoping to flank one of the PCs. De Belame waits until the zombies have fallen before calling forth the cultists hiding in area **18h**. The cultists emerge and attack only if the zombies are slain or if the baron himself is attacked.

Set against one wall is an iron-reinforced ladder leading up to a trapdoor barred from this side. PCs who slide the bar aside and open the trapdoor find themselves in area **2b**.

Creatures (EL 6 for the baron, EL 7 if Amice is also present): Statistics for Baron Isambart de Belame appear in the "Major Villains" sidebar, while Amice's statistics are given in **Event 3**. In addition to the baron, Amice, and the cultists, the PCs must contend with de Belame's four zombie bodyguards.

Human Zombies (4): hp 20 each; see area **17d** for complete statistics.

18g. Storage. This rough-hewn room contains various magic component supplies, preserved organs from humans sacrificed in the main temple, and the trappings of de Belame's dark religion (vestments, pentacle pendants, and so forth).

18h. Dark Temple. When the PCs enter this chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

> A wave of pure evil washes over you as you enter this cavern. You barely have time to take in any of the features before you are captivated by the massive, horrific stone visage that dominates the far wall of the room. So overpowering is the horned visage that you find it almost impossible to avert your eyes, even though your stomach churns at what you see.

Tearing one's gaze away from the statue requires a successful Will saving throw (DC 11). The PC carrying the vial given to the party by Sir Guy (assuming it is still within the PCs' possession) gains a +3 holy bonus to the saving throw. Successfully making the saving throw allows the rest of the room to be viewed. PCs who fail remain captivated until they succeed. A new Will saving throw is permitted each round. Transfixed PCs are considered stunned. PCs who are suffer damage (real or subdual) immediately snap out of their trance but must still make a successful saving throw the next round or be transfixed once again.

Once a PC is able to examine the rest of the chamber, read or paraphrase the following:

> The cavern is about 30 feet in diameter. Although the statue physically looks just a little taller than a man would stand, you cannot drive the impression of overwhelming hugeness from your mind. The statue appears to leer wickedly over a stone block, perfectly angular, that stands in the western part of the chamber. The block is stained with patches of dried blood.

Like the Incantestibule, this chamber is affected by the equivalent of a *desecrate* spell, although there are normally no undead creatures present.

If de Belame has summoned them to area **18f**, the six cultists normally encountered here are not present. These cultists wear black robes and wooden masks depicting horrible, horned demons. See **Creatures** below for statistics.

The stone block serves as the main altar used in the cultists' rituals. When the PC carrying Gisburn's vial views it (after making the Will saving throw described above), he or she will inexplicably know that this is the altar Guy spoke of. Should any of the contents of the vial be spilled on the altar (or holy water in general), read or paraphrase the following:

> As the liquid touches the cold stone, the atmosphere in the chamber seems to undulate, shimmering as if affected by an intense heat-haze. A guttural scream begins to build, growing in intensity until reaching an unbearable pitch. Then, with a mighty crack, the altar and the statue shatter! The power of the blast sends you reeling.

Everyone within the chamber must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) or be stunned for 1d4 rounds by the blast.

Destroying the Altar: At the moment the altar shatters, de Belame and his followers (Amice and the cultists) immediately lose all of their magical powers, including spell effects currently in use. The *obscuring mist* in the Incantestibule remains, since it is not magical once summoned, but dissipates naturally. All of de Belame's zombies become inanimate corpses and fall to the floor, de Belame loses his connection to Wart (his toad familiar), and the baron's magic *dagger* loses its power to *animate dead*. Scant seconds after the blast, de Belame (if alive) collapses in a heap and begins sobbing. Although it will return in time, his sanity has been severely stretched, both through the sudden loss of his magical ability and because of a mortal realization of the dark powers he has been dealing with for so long. Amice, if still alive, shows her true loyalty by fleeing up the ladder to the trapdoor in the ceiling of the Incantestibule.

Once de Belame has been defeated, either through combat or by destroying the altar, proceed to **Event 7**.

Creatures (EL 4): De Belame's cultists are 1st-level necromancers. They first cast their *chill touch* and *ray of enfeeblement* spells, then fight with their bloodstained daggers.

Cultists, Human Male and Female Nec1 (6): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4 (×3), 3 (×3); Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Isambart de Belame: The Making of a Villain

Encounter Level Chart

Any encounter involving creatures or traps has an Encounter Level (EL), An EL value gives the DM an idea of how challenging the encounter is.

If the EL is lower than the party level, the encounter is relatively easy. If the EL is equal to the party level, the encounter is moderately challenging. If the EL is higher than the party level, the encounter is tough and potentially deadly to the PCs if they are unwise or unlucky.

The EL 9 encounters with John Carter and Sir Guy are not intended as combat encounters, and PCs should not receive experience points for them unless the encounter results in a battle and the PCs emerge victorious.

Summarized below are the ELs for all of the encounters in this adventure:

Outdoor Events

Event	Encounter Description	EL
2	John Carter, Human Rgr3	9
	4 Norman Foresters, Human Rgr1	
	2 Norman Captains, Human War2	
	12 Norman Soldiers, Human War1	
3	Justin, Human Ftr4	3 or 8
	Amice, Human Rog3/Nec1	
	Drystan, Human Ftr3	
	Morgan, Human Ftr2/Rog1	
	Brice, Human Ftr1/Rog1	
	Drogo, Human Bbn2	
5	Sir Guy of Gisburn, Human Ftr4	9
	11 Norman Soldiers, Human War1	

Outdoor Encounters

Area	Encounter Description	EL
6	1 Boar	2
7	10-foot-deep Spiked Pit Trap	1
	Swinging Logs Trap	1
	Covered Grave Trap	1/2
	Throatcutter Bush Trap	1
	Footbreaker Trap	1
	Wishbone Snare Trap	1

Castle de Belame Encounters

Area	Encounter Description	EL
3	1 Captain, Human War3	5
	6 Guards, Human War1	
4	2 Guards, Human War1	1/wall
11	1 Hippogriff	2
13	1 Captain, Human War3	5
	6 Guards, Human War1	
13a	2 Guards, Human War1	1/wall
17d	8 Human Zombies	4
	3 Ghouls	3
17l	Poisoned Needle Trap	1
18c	10 Human Zombies	5
18f	Isambart de Belame	6
	4 Human Zombies	
18h	6 Cultists, Human Nec1	4

Skills: Alchemy +5, Concentration +5, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Spellcraft +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.

Spells (3/2): 0—*disrupt undead, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*chill touch, ray of enfeeblement*. These necromancers cannot cast spells from the Evocation school.

Possessions: Black ceremonial robe, pentacle pendant, dagger, wooden demon mask.

Expanding the Adventure

Many parts of this adventure are open to expansion and continuation, particularly if the module is used as part of a protracted campaign. Some suggestions appear below.

Sherwood: Only a slice of the Forest is featured in the adventure. To ensure success, it is possible that de Belame sent more than just one band of hired outlaws into the woods. Although the adventure's events can proceed as they generally appear, there might still be other evil bandits in Sherwood, now masterless, that must be dealt with eventually.

Nottingham: Nottingham itself is a mere sketch in the adventure. If the PCs travel to the city, the streets of Nottingham hold many possibilities for adventure, including encounters with soldiery loyal to both Isambart de Belame and Robert de Rainault. The involvement of Abbot Hugo is similarly left unclear, and DMs might wish to involve him on a greater level: Is he for or against de Belame's scheme, and what will he do once the baron's scheme is thwarted? Will he aid or hinder the PCs in bringing de Belame to justice?

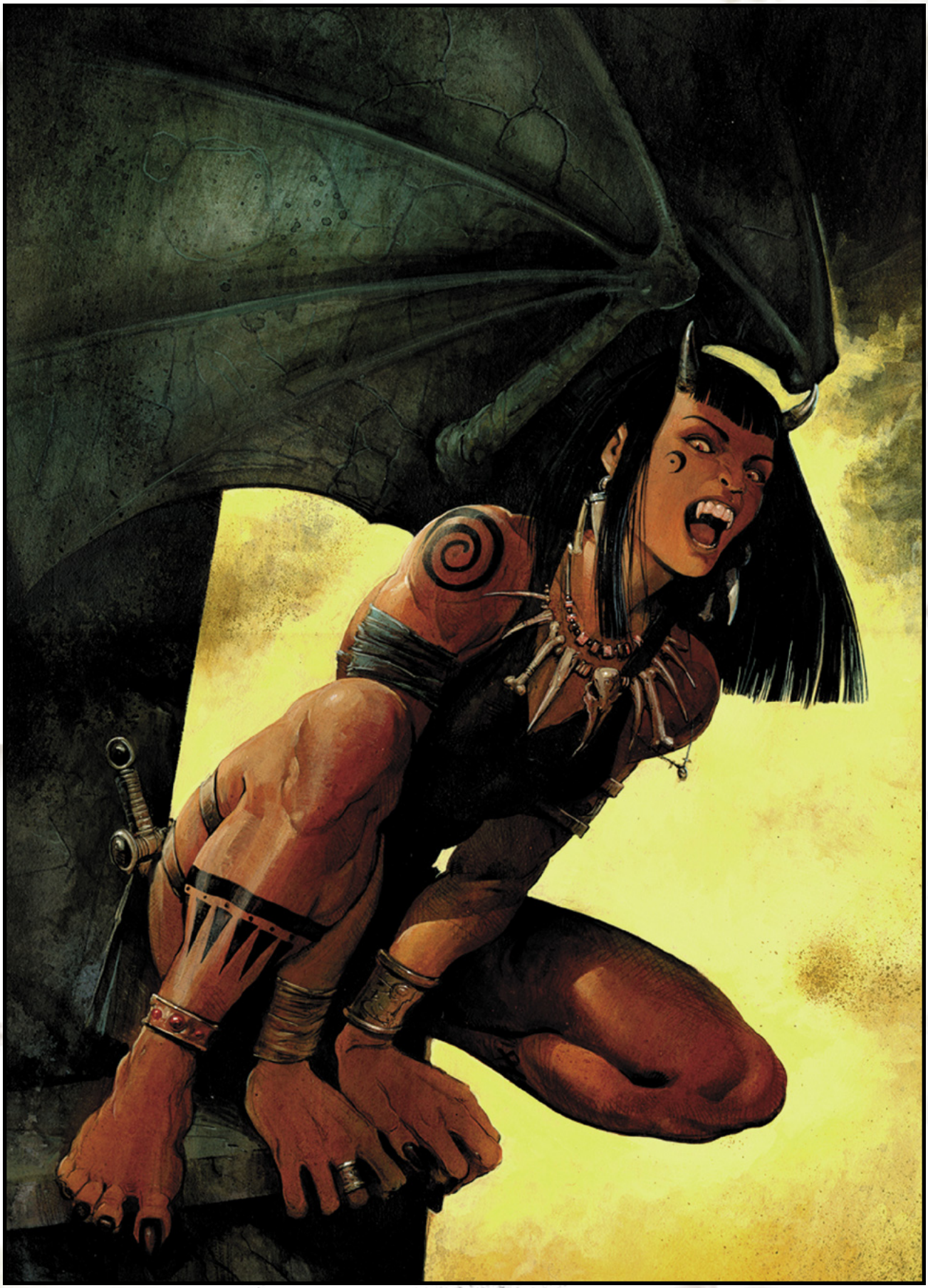
Castle de Belame: In a more fantastic setting, de Belame's keep can be a much more dangerous place than depicted in the adventure. Perhaps de Belame has one or two bound demons in his service, or maybe other types of undead stalk the castle. A nasty twist could be to make de Belame himself undead—perhaps a vampire. Such modification, though, will require you to re-address the suggested level of the PCs used.

Continuing the Adventure

The PCs might make new friends and enemies that could reappear later in the campaign. The adventure assumes, for example, that the members of Justin's band are slain at some point. Perhaps one or more of them escape these events, later gathering other survivors of de Belame's regime to hunt down the slayers of their master. (Amice is a prime candidate.)

John Carter remains unimpressed by the PCs' skills, but their incredible luck at surviving the perils of Castle de Belame compels him to treat them with more kindness than his position should allow. Although he certainly does not offer his friendship or loyalty, he would certainly consider new alliances in the future (if it suited him or his liege). Conversely, members of Carter's patrol might remember the brave PCs and be suitably impressed. It is possible that some of these individuals might entertain friendship with the outlaws, maybe even acting as their agents, reporting on the Sheriff's plans for the folk of Sherwood Forest.

Ian Malcomson is a frequent contributor to Dragon *Magazine. Earlier this year, he and his gaming group were featured on the Wizards of the Coast 3rd-Edition web page as Playtesters of the Month. Ian lives in England, where he need not travel far to find inspiration for Sherwood adventures!*



Eye for an Eye

A Villain with a Vision

by Patrick W. Ross

artwork by Carl Critchlow, cartography by Todd Gamble with Patrick Ross

"Eye for an Eye" is a D&D® adventure designed for four 3rd-level characters. A druid or ranger would be helpful, as most of the adventure occurs in the wilderness (forest and swamp). The party should possess a wide variety of skills. PCs who complete the adventure will probably gain a level and might earn enough experience by the end to reach 5th level. The DM can modify the adventure for characters of levels 1-8 by adjusting the encounters as described in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. The adventure begins when the PCs are traveling a little used road between two small towns.

Adventure Background

In the distant past, a druid named Illitol protected the forest in which the PCs are traveling. During this time, a solitary wizard named Radeem, who also lived in the area, turned to evil after trifling with magic he could not control. Illitol helped an elven legion banish the wizard and destroy Radeem's stronghold. To discourage others from plundering the ruins, Illitol raised a swamp over the area. Years later, Illitol saved the nearby hamlet of Cherry Knoll from a charlatan who had used an amulet called the Symbol of the False Prophet to charm the townsfolk. After defeating the huckster, Illitol gave the amulet to the town cleric for safekeeping.

Illitol died a serene old man, leaving behind as his legacy a beautifully balanced forest. The descendant of one of his followers, an intelligent wolf named Thornfur, now carries on this legacy as self-proclaimed guardian of the forest. Illitol is now but a vague memory to the townsfolk of Cherry Knoll; they just remember a kind, old hermit.

Years after Illitol's death, a hideously deformed child with only one eye was born in Cherry Knoll. Shunned and teased by the locals and abandoned by his family, the child, Plygar, was taken in by the local clergy. The chaplain raised and educated the boy. Later, he put Plygar to work as a grounds-keeper. Plygar lived in a shack behind the church. Despite the chaplain's act of kindness, the majority of Plygar's time was spent reading books and dreaming of devious ways to exact revenge against the townsfolk who relentlessly tormented him.

Plygar discovered the Symbol of the False Prophet hidden in the church. Knowing the history of the item from tales spun by a creepy local widower, Plygar removed the magic amulet and replaced it with a wooden fake, carved and painted like the original. To date, no one in Cherry Knoll has learned of the theft. Craving power, Plygar intended to use the amulet on the townsfolk, but his plans changed after he stole a book from a passing merchant.

The book was a journal written by one of Radeem's apprentices. The apprentice, a selfish and petulant young man, had forsaken his master to become an adventurer. In the journal, the young man (whose name is never mentioned) recounted several botched adventures, the deaths of several companions, and his hope to someday strike it rich. The journal remarked about the destruction of Radeem's stronghold and gave enough information for Plygar to locate the ruins. (It seems the former apprentice had planned to loot the ruined stronghold; unfortunately, he was captured by an elven hunting party before he could reach it.)

Plygar left Cherry Knoll and moved into the swamp. Using stolen materials, he began constructing a series of floodgates that would raise the level of the swamp and build up a tremendous wall of water. Releasing the water would destroy Cherry Knoll's crops and undoubtedly damage several of its buildings. His plan was simple: While the townsfolk who had tormented him were starving to death over the winter months, Plygar would explore the ruins of the drained swamp.

Plygar needed muscle to finish the floodgates, protect him from the dangers of the swamp, and guard him in the unlikely event the townsfolk of Cherry Knoll somehow learned of his plans. He solved this problem by using the Symbol of the False Prophet to cast a *mass charm* spell on a passing caravan. The caravan consisted of Janne, a wealthy merchant's daughter, and her guards. Uncertain about the duration of the *mass charm* spell, Plygar recasts the spell every few days to ensure the caravan's continued loyalty. Janne and her guards regard Plygar as a trusted friend and cannot be convinced that he is anything but a great and wise man. Only a *dispel magic* spell (cast upon a charmed victim or upon the Symbol of the False Prophet) or several days out of Plygar's control can break his hold over them.

There was only one thing missing from Plygar's triumph. He is quite self-conscious of his missing eye and wanted a false eye

Scaling the Adventure

Although this adventure is designed for 3rd-level PCs, the module can be run for 1st- to 8th-level PCs by changing the strength and number of opponents. The "Encounter Level Table" at the end of the adventure lists the encounter levels for all of the encounters. Use this as a baseline for modifying the adventure in the manner suggested below:

1st-level PCs: The adventure, as written, is too challenging for 1st-level PCs. Simplify or remove encounters of EL 4 or higher, or make sure the PCs have the option to retreat or circumvent the danger. Do not roll for random encounters. No trap in the adventure should inflict more than 2d8 points of damage. You should also consider giving the PCs an ally (like Orem the mad centaur).

2nd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but be aware that encounters will be tough for PCs—and potentially fatal if they're careless. Modify encounters of EL 6 or higher. For instance, you can make Thurra, the half-fiend Rog3/Sor2 (an EL 7 encounter), a half-fiend Sor2 (an EL 4 encounter) by dropping her rogue class abilities and rogue hit points. For PCs of this level, also consider using few if any random encounters.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written. If the PCs are having too easy a time, increase the frequency of random encounters, equip the NPCs with better armor and weapons, and give each of the major creatures and NPCs one or two additional (minor) magic items (both offensive and defensive). Thurra might have a *wand of hold person* and a *+1 ring of deflection*, while Plygar might have a *+1 amulet of natural armor* and a magic stone that lets him cast *summon monster III* once/week.

6th- to 8th-level PCs: Substitute the adventure's EL 1-3 encounters with more challenging ones. Perhaps Plygar has struck a deal with band of ogres or trolls that live in the swamp and is using them to further his plans.

If you increase the challenge of the adventure, you must also increase the amount of treasure to preserve the challenge-to-treasure ratio. This adventure has approximately 32,325 gp worth of treasure. To calculate the right amount of treasure (coins, goods, and items) for a party starting out at a higher or lower level, multiply 10,775 gp by the party's starting level.

to fill his empty left socket. Unfortunately, he could not afford to have one crafted. From Janne he heard that a recently deceased halfling (a friend of Janne's father) had a bejeweled false eye, rumored to be of exquisite craftsmanship. Using his charmed guards as intermediaries, Plygar convinced an unscrupulous merchant to steal the eye for him. As he lacks sufficient funds to pay the exorbitant price he promised, Plygar plans to kill the merchant once the eye is produced. Revenge, a jeweled eye, a ravaged town, and a wealth of power gleaned from the ruins: All of it will be his!

Adventure Summary

To successfully complete the adventure, PCs must foil Plygar's plan to flood the town, stop him from exploring the ruins of Radeem's stronghold, save as many charmed caravan members as possible, return the stolen Symbol of the False Prophet and bejeweled eye to their rightful owners, and if possible, bring Plygar to justice.

The adventure begins with the PCs on the road. They witness an exchange between the merchant's courier and two of Plygar's charmed guards that ends with the courier's decapitation. If the PCs intercede and discover the bejeweled eye, they are soon drawn into Plygar's scheme. They must travel through the forest and into the nearby swamp, then navigate several dangers within the swamp to reach Plygar's dwelling. Along the way, they might also form an alliance with the forest's guardian, Thornfur the wolf.

The town of Cherry Knoll is left deliberately vague so that you can substitute any sleepy town or hamlet from your campaign. The only requirements are that it includes a small church, an inn, and a mill. Most of the NPCs encountered in this adventure are either warriors or commoners, as detailed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Forest Encounters

The following encounters are keyed to the adjacent Forest Map. While the PCs are in the forest, check for random encounters once every hour. Consult the "Random Encounters" table for details.

A. Intrigue in the Road.

You are traveling north, leaving behind the quaint town of Cherry Knoll. The local miller assured you that you should reach an inn called the Thorn and Petal a few hours after sunset. The road is somewhat overgrown and seldom used, but easily traversed. The sky is clear, and the sound of songbirds in the surrounding forest provides a welcome change from the howling wind. Growing on the side of the road are wildflowers in full bloom.

Ahead you see a small man wearing a rose-colored cloak speaking to a pair of burly, armed men. The burly men are dressed in chainmail covered in yellow surcoats bearing the symbol of a merchant house. One carries a halberd, the other a longspear and short sword. It does not appear that they have seen you.

The small man passes a leather pouch to the guard with the spear. The guard carefully inspects the pouch and places it inside the folds of his surcoat. In a surprise flash of steel, the other guard swings the halberd at the small man, decapitating him. His head tumbles into the underbrush and vanishes from sight.

Allow each PC one partial action. A PC can use the partial action to hide behind a nearby bush or tree or attack the guards with a readied ranged weapon. The guards are standing 200 feet away. If the PCs do not use their partial action to hide, the guards spot them.

The PCs have just witnessed Plygar's "payment" for the bejeweled eye. The two charmed guards, Ontho and Laisis, were sent by Plygar to obtain the eye from a merchant rogue named Jellegin Walgar. The decapitated fellow lying in the middle of the road is Jellegin's courier, Seth.

If the PCs rush the guards or attack them with ranged weapons, Ontho and Laisis flee northeastward and try to lose the PCs in the forest. They head toward their camp (area **D**), where they make their final stand.

If the PCs confront Ontho and Laisis rather than attack them, Ontho introduces himself and his comrade and does

most of the talking. He says they were sent ahead by a caravan yesterday to scout for bandits. He also claims to have just killed one. There are no tracks or other clues that might corroborate the guard's story. Ontho does not possess the Bluff skill; a PC can determine whether he's lying by making a successful Sense Motive skill check (opposed by Ontho's Charisma check). Sensing that the guards have been charmed requires a separate Sense Motive skill check (DC 25) and must be declared by the PC attempting to detect the enchantment.

If the PCs let them go, Ontho and Laisis head toward their camp (area **D**) where, according to Ontho, they plan to wait for their caravan to arrive from the north. If the PCs leave, Ontho and Laisis stay at their camp only a few minutes before heading east toward the swamp.

PCs who follow Ontho and Laisis into the forest are spotted unless they remain quiet and out of sight. A successful Hide skill check (opposed by the guards' Spot skill checks) and Move Silently skill check (opposed by the guards' Listen skill checks) must be made to stay within sight of the guards without alerting them. PCs cannot take 20 on these rolls, and new rolls must be made each hour of pursuit.

If the PCs wish, they can simply track the guards, thus staying out of sight; this requires the Track feat and a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 15) each hour. A failed roll means the trail has been lost; after 1d20 minutes of searching, a new check can be attempted to find the guards' trail. PCs who are in no hurry can take 20 on their rolls if they wish.

If the PCs capture one or both of the guards, Ontho and Laisis do not mention Plygar unless the charm is successfully dispelled. In other words, they cling to their lies. If the charm is dispelled or wears off, they are much more helpful. They tell the PCs about Plygar, whom they suspect is an enchanter, and his plan to flood the town of Cherry Knoll and explore the ruins of Radeem's stronghold. They know where Plygar's lair is located and offer to lead the PCs there. They do not allow PCs to harm the other charmed members of their caravan, Janne in particular.

Near the body of the courier, PCs locate two smooth, dark, gray marking stones. The stones are fairly inconspicuous and identify a trail leading into the forest.

Ontho and Laisis are detailed under **Creatures** below. PCs who search the body of the decapitated courier find a blood-spattered cloak, three days' rations, and a dagger. Ontho and Laisis carry **Treasure #1** and **Treasure #2** respectively.

Creatures (EL 3): Ontho is 28 years old with broad shoulders and long, dark hair pulled back in a braid.

Ontho, Human Male War2 (charmed): CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 2d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 17; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail armor); Atk +5 melee (1d10+2/crit ×3, halberd); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +5, Handle Animal +1, Ride +3, Swim +5. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (halberd).

Possessions: Chainmail, halberd, wax-sealed scroll (see **Treasure #1** below).

Laisis is 26 years old with a slender, well-muscled frame, olive complexion, a short beard, and cropped black hair.

Laisis, human male War2 (charmed): CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in.); HD 2d8+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 15; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+5 chainmail armor); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/crit ×3, longspear) or +3 melee (1d6+1/crit 19-20, short sword); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animal +1, Ride +3, Swim +3. *Feats:* Toughness, Weapon Focus (longspear).

Possessions: Chainmail, longspear, short sword, small leather bag (see **Treasure #2** below).

Treasure #1: In addition to his armor and weapons, Ontho carries a scroll sealed with a small dollop of wax (no author seal). The following is written on the scroll:

Plygar,

Here is Shucky the Imp's fake eye. This was not easy to come by and was obtained with considerable risk. Risk equals cost, as they say. I am being investigated by the local militia, so I had to send a courier. I will return at the next scheduled time, and I expect 1,500 gold pieces or their equivalent in trade goods when we next meet. Finding the swamp again should be no problem. Just have your goons by the marking stones escort me in.

The scroll is unsigned, but Ontho and Laisis assume that it was written by Jellegin Walgar. PCs who decide to wait for the "meeting" mentioned in Jellegin's letter will be disappointed; the disappearance of his courier forces Jellegin to abandon all hope of recovering the bejeweled eye and receiving his compensation.

A bard can make a bardic knowledge check (DC 15), with a bonus equal to the bard's level plus Intelligence modifier, to recognize Shucky the Imp as a famous halfling comedian. The DM might also allow halfling PCs from this region to make a Gather Information skill check (DC 15) to know this.

Treasure #2: Laisis carries a small leather pouch containing a glazed ceramic eye with a garnet for a pupil. The gem alone is worth 500 gp. The eye with the gem is worth 1,000 gp to a collector of oddities.

B. The Sheriff's Patrol. Ideally, this encounter occurs before the PCs leave the immediate vicinity of area **A**. If the PCs have been lured off the road by Ontho and Laisis, you might need to modify or reschedule this encounter.

An assemblage of halfling ponyriders thunders around a bend in the road. The halflings are armed with shortbows and short swords, and they wear bright green surcoats over their leather armor. Their ponies appear well-groomed but tired, as if they are in the middle of a long chase. A proud-looking halfling with a feathered cap motions them to stop a respectable distance away. He signals you with a wave and says, "Hail travelers! I am Sheriff Rixin Stoutblood, and I seek information!"

After a quick exchange of greetings, Rixin states that he and his fellow halflings are pursuing grave robbers. Apparently the grave robbers plundered the resting places of several prominent halflings in a community a few days' ride to the north. Rixin also speaks of a disreputable merchant who was seen with a cloaked man near the cemetery. When questioned, the merchant, Jellegin Walgar, tried to flee. He was quickly captured but denied any knowledge about the robberies. A PC who is wearing a rose-colored cloak (or perhaps the one taken from the body of the slain courier in area A) might have some fast explaining to do! If the PCs reveal the fate of Jellegin Walgar's courier, Sheriff Rixin asks to see the body. If the PCs claim to have recovered the false eye, Rixin demands its return. If the PCs try to steal or lie about the eye and get caught, the sheriff uses the Tactics described below to compel PCs to relinquish the eye. Once the eye is returned, Rixin and his company return to their town.

If shown the scroll recovered from Ontho, Rixin demands it. If the PCs resist, he grudgingly offers to buy it for 50 gp. He plans to use the scroll as evidence to incriminate Jellegin as the mastermind behind the grave robbings.

Creatures (EL 3): Rixin and his band are detailed below. The community from which these halflings hail has a more separatist attitude than most halfling communities. They generally distrust "tall folk." If the PC party includes halflings or gnomes, they are less leery.

Rixin Stoutblood, Halfling Male War1: CR 1; Small Humanoid (3 ft. tall); HD 1d8; hp 7; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6, crit 19-20, short sword) or +3 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); SQ +2 morale bonus on saving throws vs. fear; AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animal +2, Hide +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Ride +4, Sense Motive +1. *Feat:* Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, shortbow with 10 arrows, 50 gp in pouch.

Posse, Male and Female Halflings Com1 (10): CR 1/6; Small Humanoid (3 ft. tall); HD 1d4-1; hp 2 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft; AC 12 (+2 leather armor); Atk +0 melee (1d6/crit 19-20, short sword) or +1 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); SQ +2 morale bonus on saving throws vs. fear; AL LG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 9, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Handle Animal +2, Hide +4, Jump +2, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Ride +5, Spot +2. *Feat:* Skill Focus (Ride).

Possessions: Leather armor, short sword, shortbow with 10 arrows, 10 sp in pouch.

The halflings' ponies are docile and do not attack the PCs, fleeing if rendered riderless.

Ponies (11): CR 1/4; Medium-size Animal (5 ft. tall); HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +2 melee (1/1, hooves); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5.

SQ–Scent (Ex): Ponies can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

Tactics: If pressed into combat, the halflings rely on missile fire to prevail. Their ponies are trained to trot backward (Spd 20 ft.) to keep at least 20 feet of distance between the archers and their targets. Archers attack spellcasters first. If four or more halflings are taken down, the morale of the posse breaks, at which time they flee.

Random Encounters: The Forest

Roll 1d12 every hour. A result of 1-4 indicates some sort of forest phenomenon (events that occur without explanation). A result of 5-8 indicates an odd find. A result of 9-12 indicates an encounter with one or more wandering creatures. Phenomena can be used to add suspense or evoke a sense of wonder. Odd finds are similar to phenomena except that they can be explained.

Phenomena (Roll 1d4)

1. The PCs hear a rustling sound just off the trail (50%) or feel a brief earth tremor beneath their feet (50%).
2. The PCs hear an unusual sound (crying, howling, snapping twigs, metal striking metal, creaking leather, or growling).
3. The PCs see small, unidentifiable shapes dart into the underbrush as they approach.
4. The PCs smell something peculiar (sharp cheese, offal, sweet pollen, cooking food, spicy scent).

Odd Finds (Roll 1d4)

1. Dead Orcs.

> The decomposing bodies of six orcs lay strewn about moss-covered rocks. Closer examination reveals claw marks on their leather armor and bites in their flesh. Lying near the corpses are the orcs' wooden spears.

A tribe of orcs was planning to establish an outpost in the forest, hoping to raid nearby trade routes. Thornfur and his pack dispatched these scouts. When the scouts failed to return, the orc chieftain opted to find a more hospitable location. The orcs have no treasure, and their spears are poorly constructed.

2. Stacked Stones. A 3-foot-high pyramid of carefully stacked stones rests near a fallen tree. PCs familiar with siegecraft can identify these as catapult stones. These were left behind after the elven legion laid siege to Radeem's stronghold in the swamp.

3. Burned Tree.

> A great tree ravaged by fire stands amid several untouched trees. Its scorched trunk and blackened branches are eyesores in this otherwise beautiful corner of the forest.

This great tree was the victim of a lightning strike. Thornfur and his pack were able to stop the fire from spreading by clearing the ground around the base of the tree. A rainstorm spared the surrounding trees.

4. Rusted Trap.

> A rusted steel bear trap lies half-buried amid a pile of leaves. It appears to have been there for some time.

A human trapper abandoned this device after being driven out of the forest by Thornfur's ancestors many years ago. Most of the forest denizens know about the trap and avoid it. The rust has frozen the trap, and it can no longer be sprung.

Wandering Creatures (Roll 1d10)

1-2. Lone Wolf (EL 1).

> You spot a lone wolf pouncing on mice in the undergrowth. When it notices you, the wolf darts away to a safe distance and watches you for a moment before bolting off into the trees.

If the PCs have already encountered Thornfur, they recognize this wolf as one of the young males of the pack. Refer to area **G** for complete statistics.

3-4. Trapdoor Spider (EL 1). The PCs are attacked by a Medium-size monstrous spider. The arachnid waits in its camouflaged burrow, attacking the last PC in the marching order. Spotting the trapdoor spider's lair before the monster strikes requires an opposed Spot check against the spider's Hide skill check. The spider has no treasure.

Medium-size Monstrous Spider (1): CR 1; hp 11. This spider does not spin webs. See area **J** for complete statistics.

5-6. Giant Ants (EL 2). The PCs encounter two giant worker ants left homeless following the flood of their anthill (area I). They are confused, agitated, and attack anything they perceive as food, including the PCs.

Giant worker ants (2): CR 1; hp 9 each. See area **I** for complete statistics.

7-8. Mad Centaur (EL 3). A mad centaur named Orem claims portions of the forest as his hunting ground. Thornfur and his wolves tolerate the centaur and rarely see him nowadays, as the centaur has become a bit of a recluse. Orem has a white beard and white mane of hair, and his equine hindquarters are dappled gray.

The PCs might encounter Orem on a hunt, bathing in a creek, or picking wild apples. Once he detects them, he steadies his bow and fires a warning shot in their direction. If the PCs don't leave his territory, Orem shoots more arrows at them; if the PCs close to melee range or retaliate with missile fire, Orem bounds off into the woods and stays out of sight.

Orem (Centaur): CR 3; Large Monstrous Humanoid (8 ft. tall); HD 4d8+8; hp 28; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +2 natural, +2 large shield); Atk +7 melee (1d10+4, greatclub), +4 melee (1d6+2/1d6+2, hooves); or +5 ranged (1d8+4/crit 19-20, mighty composite longbow [+4]); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +3 Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +6. *Feat:* Weapon Focus (hoof).

Possessions: Large wooden shield, greatclub, mighty composite longbow [+4] with 24 arrows.

9-10. Cockatrice (EL 3).

If the PCs take no hostile actions, the

> A strange creature chases a rabbit across the path ahead but stops when it sees you. It has the head and body of a cockerel, bat wings, and the long tail of a lizard tipped with a few feathers.

cockatrice stares at them stupidly for a moment before waddling off into the forest in search of more rabbits.

Cockatrice (1): CR 3; Small Magical Beast (3 ft. tall); HD 5d10; hp 27; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 60 ft. (poor); AC 14 (+1 size, +3 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d4-2, bite); SA petrification; SQ petrification immunity; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Spot +5, Listen +5. *Feat:* Dodge.

SA—Petrification (Su): Creatures hit by the cockatrice must make a successful Will saving throw (DC 15) or be instantly turned to stone.

SQ—Petrification Immunity (Ex): The cockatrice is immune to the petrifying ability of other cockatrices, but not other petrifying attacks.

C. Into the Forest.

The narrow trail leads off the road and into the forest. Great, dark trunks support a dense canopy of leaves. The thin sunlight limits the amount of undergrowth. Rich mosses and lichen grow on the exposed rock, and butterflies flit through the sunbeams. Although the trail looks seldom traveled, you do spot the occasional footprint.

At one time, this forest was tended and protected by the great druid Illitol. Now it is watched over by the white wolf Thornfur, kin to one of the druid's former followers. His pack has successfully repelled a trapper and stopped a small forest fire; however, Thornfur has been unable to remove a choke creeper growing near the druid's hill or foil Plygar's plan to drain the swamp to the east.

The footprints on the trail belong to Ontho and Laisis and lead to their camp (area **D**). Following the tracks requires the Track feat and a successful (though simple) Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 6).

D. Guards' Camp.

A 20-foot-diameter wall of 5-foot-high, sharpened wooden spikes juts outward from this small camp. The spikes are 6 inches in diameter and spaced 8 inches apart. A lean-to has been constructed in the center of the bristling ring of spikes. Two deadfalls have been dragged and left next to a cold firepit. Refuse and food scraps have been tossed carelessly aside. The camp looks ugly and out of place in the forest.

Ontho and Laisis used this area to camp while keeping an eye on the road, which is just barely visible through the trees. After repeated wolf attacks, they constructed a ring of spikes. (A wolf would be hard-pressed to jump the wall without being skewered.)

The only items of value in the camp are three full waterskins, two thick wool cloaks, and a pair of bedrolls.

If the PCs follow Ontho and Laisis back to their camp, the guards stay only a few minutes—long enough to gather up their bedrolls, waterskins, and wool cloaks—before heading east toward the swamp. If attacked in their camp, the guards use the deadfalls as one-half cover against missile attacks. If allowed to continue on their eastward course, Ontho and Laisis soon run afoul of Thornfur the white wolf in area **F**. See that area for more details.

E. Memorial.

The trail splits in front of an enormous tree. An ivy-covered block of pale stone stands in front of the tree. Atop this slab is a worn and weathered statue of an elf battling a troll. The statue captures the moment when the elf, though seemingly overpowered, gracefully sidesteps the troll's clumsy attack and slips his sword through the troll's heart.

This monument was erected following the siege of Radeem's stronghold. It was placed here by the elves to remember those elves who had fallen ridding the world of evil. The statue stands 4 feet tall and is actually part of the pale stone slab; the whole thing weighs 300 lbs.

After pulling away the ivy, PCs fluent in Elf can decipher the script etched into the front of the slab. Bards and rogues can make a Decipher Script skill check (DC 25) to translate the words:

In memory of those fallen for the cause of light. On this spot, great heroes began the hard march to abolish a fierce darkness. Many sacrificed themselves so that others might live free of a tyrant's reign.

F. Remains of the Road.

The trail widens suddenly, becoming an ancient road of dark, tightly fitted gray stones. The old road continues for a hundred yards before it is again obscured by dirt and overgrown with sod.

This was once the road to Radeem's stronghold and one of the few sections not consumed by the forest.

The following boxed text should be read or paraphrased to the PCs at this time. However, if the PCs are trailing the guards, Ontho and Laisis, the DM should modify this scene appropriately, as described in the **Development** section.

You see a large white wolf lying on a nearby hillside, casually watching you. The wolf rises slowly and walks lazily to the trail. It then stops and eyes you warily. Suddenly, your mind is filled with visions and flashes of emotion. At first, you find the delirium disconcerting until you realize that the wolf is trying to communicate with you empathically. The wolf's thoughts do not convey words, but it can effectively make known the substance of its ideas.

Although the wolf claims to understand human speech, it cannot speak. It refers to itself as Thornfur, guardian of the forest, and warns that great danger lies ahead. The wolf turns toward the south and asks you to follow, offering a place of safety where you can talk and rest.

Thornfur is a descendant of one of Illitol's lupine followers. If the PCs attack him, Thornfur flees to area **G**, gathers his wolf brethren, and returns to drive the PCs out of the forest.

Unless the PCs attack or threaten him, Thornfur invites them to Illitol's sod house (area **G**). If the PCs decline, Thornfur offers a nonspecific "reward" if they'll accompany him. If they still refuse, he watches them depart then lopes off into the forest. If the PCs agree to accompany him, Thornfur pads ahead of the group and leads them to the sod house. While Thornfur accompanies the PCs, do not roll for random encounters.

Creature (EL 1): The PCs should not receive experience points for slaying Thornfur, only for befriending him.

Thornfur (White Wolf): CR 1; Medium-Size Animal (6 ft. long); HD 2d8+4; hp 18; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +4. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SQ—Scent (Ex): Thornfur can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

Development: If the PCs have been trailing Ontho and Laisis, the encounter with Thornfur is changed somewhat. Seeing an

opportunity to thwart Plygar's plans, Thornfur ambushes the guards. A battle erupts, and Lainis is killed. During the battle, however, Thornfur is reduced to -1 hit points and begins losing 1 hit point per round until he stabilizes (10% chance per round) or dies (drops to -10 hit points). Ontho escapes with only a few scratches and has 13 hit points remaining after the encounter. Believing that both Laisis and the wolf have been slain, he continues to flee east toward the swamp.

Administering first aid to Thornfur requires a successful Heal skill check (DC 15). Once stabilized and raised to 0 hit points or more, Thornfur empathically thanks the PCs and offers to guide them to Illitol's sod house (as described above). If Thornfur dies, the PCs have no such guide and must continue on their own.

G. Illitol's Sod House and Wolf Den.

Beehives are scattered throughout a vast field of wildflowers. A small abode has been cut into a nearby hillside. Great timbers support a sod roof that has now grown thick with flowers. A small, inviting door stands open. Sitting casually in the doorway, watching the bees fly about, is a wolf cub with its head resting lazily in its paws. It turns its head toward you and yaps a soft warning before retreating inside. You see the glowing amber eyes of several wolves peering out the door.

If Thornfur is guiding the PCs, he walks directly to the door; otherwise, he is already inside. The wolves attack only if Thornfur is not present or if Thornfur so commands.

If the PCs enter the sod house, read or paraphrase the following:

The inside of the house is spacious and mostly bare. A small plank table with two benches rests in the center of the room. A small pallet lies in one corner, neatly made with wool blankets. A cistern of water and a cupboard complete the room. Dusty wooden bowls and spoons, terracotta pots, and other bric-a-brac neatly adorn the room.

Twelve wolves lounge about, their coats ranging from off-white to rusty red to soft browns.

If the PCs have not previously met Thornfur, he attempts to communicate with them as described in area **F**.

Thornfur invites the PCs to sit at the table while he paces back and forth and empathically relates his story. He tells of a "twisted man" (Plygar) who built a dam and flooded a local anthill (area **I**). He is also troubled by a choke creeper that has taken root in the forest (area **H**) and would like the PCs' help destroying it. He would also like the PCs to rid the nearby swamp of the dam builder. In return, Thornfur tells which areas of the forest the PCs should avoid, specifically the anthill (area **I**) and the spider glade (area **J**). He also offers them free sanctuary anytime they are in the forest.

If the PCs decline to help, Thornfur shows them a patch of comfrey (an herb) growing on the nearby hillside. Druids can use their nature sense ability to recognize the comfrey, which is sometimes called bruisewort and boneknit. When applied daily to the skin, it allows wounds to heal at twice the normal rate. The herb has no effect on other ailments such as poison or disease. Fifteen applications can be harvested from this

area without destroying the herb patch. If the patch is completely stripped, PCs can obtain twenty applications.

If the PCs still decline to assist, Thornfur allows the PCs to harvest honey from the nearby beehives. Up to 4 pounds can be successfully extracted each week. The honey is worth 5 gp per pound. Harvesting the honey without incurring the bees' wrath requires a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 15). A failed roll indicates that the character is stung by bees for 1d3 points of damage each round for 3 rounds. Open flame drives away the bees and negates damage in subsequent rounds, while dousing oneself with alcohol or vinegar causes the bees to cease their attacks.

If the herbs and the honey aren't enough to entice the PCs into helping, Thornfur asks them to leave.

If the PCs agree to help, Thornfur suggests they stay in the den until sunrise. A few males leave for a while and return with enough rabbits to feed everyone. Thornfur indicates that utensils and cookware can be found in the cupboard. The pack is quite fascinated if the PCs build a fire and cook the rabbits. After eating, the pack settles down and watches the pups romp about the room.

Creatures (EL 6): Not including Thornfur, there are eight adults and four wolf pups in the sod house. The adults defend the cubs to the death. However, if two or more adult wolves are slain, the rest flee, looking back momentarily to make sure they are not followed.

Adult Wolves (8): CR 1; Medium-Size Animal (5 ft. long); HD 2d8+4; hp 13 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 50 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, bite); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6. *Skills:* Hide +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +4. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SQ–Scent (Ex): Wolves can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet.

Wolf Pups (4): CR 1/4; Tiny Animal (2 ft. long); HD 1/2d8; hp 4 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 size, +1

Dex, +1 natural); Atk +0 melee (1, bite); SQ scent (see above); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Hide +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +2.

H. The Choke Creeper. The PCs are not likely to encounter the choke creeper unless they agree to help Thornfur and his wolves rid the forest of the monster. Thus, the following boxed text assumes that Thornfur and the other adult wolves are accompanying the PCs, and it should be modified otherwise:

> Thornfur and the other adult wolves lead you through the forest to the horrid plant. Draped over a copse of evergreens is a 60-foot-long, 1-foot-thick vine, hanging from which are eight smaller, tentacle-like vines. As you near the thicket surrounding the trees, the creeper shudders with anticipation. The wolves attack, charging in without ceremony or pause, probably assuming you will follow.

Hanging from the trees is the choke creeper, a horrible plant described under **Creature** below. The wolves' statistics are presented in areas **F** and **G**. They attack the main vine, leaving the PCs to deal with the eight branching vines.

Creature (EL 6, 4 if wolves are present): The choke creeper has chosen a damp, secluded section of the forest as its lair. Its statistics are split between the main vine (which has no effective attacks) and the branching vines. If the main vine is not completely destroyed (reduced to -10 hit points and burned with fire or acid), it regrows fully in one month.

Choke Creeper—Main Vine: CR —; (see Branching Vines below); Gargantuan Plant (60 ft. long); HD 20d8+140; hp 200; Init -2 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 13 (-4 size, -2 Dex, +9 natural); Atk —; SA vines (see below); SQ fire resistance 5, cold resistance 10, immune to electricity, plant; AL N; SV Fort +19, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 32, Dex 6, Con 25, Int —, Wis 2, Cha 4.

Choke Creeper—Branching Vines (8): CR 1; HD 2d8+6; hp 13 each; Init +0; AC 16 (-1 size, +7 natural); Atk +7 melee (constriction, see below); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; Reach 20 ft.; SA constriction; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 17, Int —, Wis *, Cha *; other statistics same as Main Vine above. * The branching vines are extensions of the parent vine and do not possess their own Wisdom or Charisma scores. If the main vine dies, the branching vines all die as well.

Skill: Climb +6.

SA—Constriction (Ex): If a branching vine hits an opponent and makes a successful grapple check (see Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH*), it begins constricting its prey in subsequent rounds. Until the grapple is broken or the vine is severed, the victim takes 1d4+5 points of constriction damage each round (no attack roll necessary).

If the vine scores a critical hit with its initial attack roll and manages to grapple its victim, it wraps itself around the victim's larynx or windpipe. In addition to taking constriction damage each subsequent round, the victim must make a Constitution check (DC 10) on the round damage begins; the DC increases by 1 every round thereafter. The round after failing a Constitution check, the victim falls unconscious (0 hp). The next round, the victim drops to -1 hit points and is dying. In the third round, the victim suffocates and dies. Note that creatures immune to critical hits cannot be strangled.

A creature being constricted or strangled by a branching vine can attack the vine with a Small weapon, attempt to free itself from the vine's grapple with a successful Strength check (DC = the vine's Strength check), or slip free by making a successful the Escape Artist skill check (DC = the vine's Strength check).

SQ—Fire and Cold Resistance (Ex): The creeper negates the first 5 points of damage dealt by any fire-based attack and the first 10 points of damage dealt by any cold-based attack.

SQ—Immune to Electricity (Ex): The choke creeper is impervious to lightning and electricity-based attacks.

SQ—Plant: Choke creepers are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. They are not subject to critical hits.

Development: If Thornfur survives the battle, he welcomes the PCs as den brothers and sisters and offers their den as a place to heal or hide, as they need. He reemphasizes the offer of free passage through the forest and gives the PCs access to the beehives in area **G**. If the PCs continue into the swamp, Thornfur offers what aid he can. His pack is too few in numbers to risk entering the swamp, but he patrols the edges of the swamp and assists PCs when they return. He also warns the PCs not to leave the road and to avoid the spider glade (area **J**).

If Thornfur does not survive the battle, the PCs are welcomed back to the sod house, but communication with the surviving pack members is nigh impossible without the aid of *speak with animals* spells. PCs without such magic can influence the wolves toward a specific course of action by making a successful Animal Empathy skill check (DC 12). For instance, a druid or ranger PC can use the Animal Empathy skill to coax one or more wolves into showing the party the safest way to the swamp.

I. The Great Anthill. The following description assumes that the PCs arrive during daylight hours and should be modified accordingly if the PCs arrive at night:

> The trail ends in a circular field of wild grass. Eight enormous ants crawl about, sunlight flashing off their shiny black bodies. In the center of the field is a great mound of wet earth surrounded by pools of water. Adjacent to the damp, earthen mound, a bulbous, 7-foot-long winged ant lays atop a fresh bed of leaves. Four fierce-looking ants with sharp, flashing mandibles surround the great winged ant while the smaller workers approach the nest, bearing gifts of foraged food.

There are over thirty giant ants in this colony, but many have wandered off in confusion and might be encountered elsewhere in the forest. Only eight giant worker ants, four giant soldier ants, and the queen currently occupy the field or the immediate area. They are described under **Creatures** below. The **Treasure** lies scattered among the leaves that form the queen's nest.

The wet, earthen mound is all that remains of a giant anthill. Many ants, including pupae, were drowned when Plygar raised the level of the swamp and unknowingly flooded this field in the process.

PCs peering in the anthole see a 5-foot-diameter tunnel that descends straight down. Dark waters have risen to within 10 feet of the surface and have flooded the lower chambers

and tunnels. Flotsam, including drowned giant ants, float in the water. PCs can tell that the colony has flooded recently due to the slight erosion and fresh corpses in the entrance.

Creatures (EL 8): PCs who cross the field to explore the collapsed anthill arouse the giant ants' ire.

Giant Ant Workers (8): CR 1; Medium-Size Vermin (4 ft. long); HD 2d8; hp 9 each; Init +0; Spd 50 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17 (+7 natural); Atk +1 melee (1d6, bite); SA improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft., vermin; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +5, Spot +5.

SA—Improved Grab (Ex): If a giant ant hits with its bite attack, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. (Improved grab works only against opponents at least one size smaller than the creature.) Each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals normal bite damage. It does not provoke attacks of opportunity. It can even move (possibly carrying away the opponent).

SQ—Vermin: Giant ants are immune to all mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, and morale effects).

Giant Ant Soldiers (4): CR 2; Medium-Size Vermin (4 ft. long); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +0; Spd 50 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17 (+7 natural); Atk +3 melee (2d4+2, bite); SA improved grab, acid sting; SQ darkvision 60 ft., vermin; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +6, Spot +6.

SA—Improved Grab (Ex): This special attack is explained under the Giant Worker Ant description above. If it successfully grabs its opponent, a giant soldier ant can sting its grappled opponent (see below) as well as deal automatic bite damage on successive rounds.

SA—Acid Sting (Ex): If a giant soldier ant successfully grabs an opponent, it can attempt to sting each round using its full attack bonus. A hit with the sting attack deals 1d4+1 points of piercing damage and 1d4 points of acid damage.

SQ—Vermin: Same as above.

Giant Ant Queen (1): CR 2; Large Vermin (4 ft. long); HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 17 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +9 natural); Atk +5 melee (2d6+4, bite); Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; SA improved grab; SQ darkvision 60 ft., vermin (see above); AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 9, Con 13, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7.

SA—Improved Grab: Same as above.

Tactics: Two workers arrive within 1 round, and two new workers enter combat each round thereafter until all eight have arrived. Two of the soldiers ants defend their queen by charging and biting any PCs who come within 50 feet. (When charging, the ants receive a +2 bonus to their first attack roll but suffer a -2 penalty to AC for the round. However, they must have at least 10 feet between them and their intended prey to charge.) The other two soldiers guard the queen; treat this as a readied action, as described in Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH*. This allows a soldier ant to instantly attack a PC who comes within 5 feet of them or 10 feet of the queen. The queen readies an action to attack the first foe who enters an area she threatens; however, she does not leave her nest.

Treasure: Scattered among the leaves, beneath the queen, are three rough gems: a 10-gp moss agate, a 50-gp bloodstone, and a 50-gp smoky brown quartz.

J. Spider Glade. The following description assumes that the PCs happen upon this area during daylight hours. If the PCs are traveling at night, they see only a gleam of metal in the moonlight:

> An armored man stands between two gnarled trees, 200 feet off the trail. A longsword and shield are spread out to his sides, as if evoking a challenge. His armor is rusty and shows much wear.

Weather Table

This table is provided to add weather effects to the PCs' time in the wilderness. Some of the weather has adverse effects on combat that might alter encounters as they are written in the text.

	Day (6:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.)			Night (6:00 P.M. - 6:00 A.M.)		
	Forecast	Wind[1]	Temp	Forecast	Wind[1]	Temp
Day 1	sunny	light	warm	clear	light	warm
Day 2	partly sunny	light	moderate	light fog[2]	light	cool
Day 3	overcast/light fog[2]	moderate	chilly	drizzly/dense fog[2]	moderate	cool
Day 4	rainy[3]	gale	cool	rainy[3]	strong	cold
Day 5	drizzly	moderate	moderate	clear	moderate	moderate
Day 6	clear	strong	warm	clear	moderate	warm
Day 7	overcast	light	moderate	dense fog	none	cool

Notes

1. For the effects of wind force on ranged attacks and movement, see the *control winds* spell in the *PH*.

2. Light fog is treated as one-quarter concealment. Ranged attacks made against targets obscured by light fog have a 10% miss chance. Dense fog grants one-half concealment and affects all attacks (ranged and melee) made against targets more than 5 feet away; such attacks suffer a 20% miss chance. See "Concealment" in Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH* for details.

3. Rain diminishes the effectiveness of light missile weapons such as arrows and crossbow bolts. Ranged attacks made with bows, crossbows, and slings suffer a -2 circumstance penalty per range increment.

There are fewer trees growing in this area, and most of them are twisted and gnarled. The armored man remains perfectly still, ignoring calls and attacks by the party. PCs who make a successful Spot skill check (DC 10) or approach within 100 feet of the armored figure notice the following:

> Closer examination reveals that the knight has no face, only a bleached skull inside his helmet. Clearly, he is not alive.

The armored figure is all that remains of a lost adventurer who perished in this lightly wooded copse. His skeleton is held up by thin, gossamer webs spun by eight medium monstrous spiders that lurk in the trees nearby. PCs approaching within 100 feet of the skeleton must make a successful Spot skill check (DC 10) to detect the webs. A Spot check roll higher than the spiders' Hide skill check roll indicates that the PCs have also spotted one or more of the monstrous spiders lurking in the nearby trees. (See **Creatures** below.)

PCs approaching within 50 feet must make a Reflex save (DC 10) to avoid blundering into more nigh-invisible strands draped between the trees. Those who fail the Reflex saving throw are entangled and can try to break the webs, requiring a Strength check (DC 26), or escape the webs, requiring a successful Escape Artist skill check (DC 20). Working free of the webs is a full-round action. If the first attempt fails, new attempts can be made in subsequent rounds. Entangled PCs cannot perform any other actions. PCs cannot take 20 to free themselves until after the spiders are slain. PCs who are not ensnared can attack the webs. There are four web "sheets," each one large enough to snare a Small or Medium-size PC; each web "sheet" has 6 hit points and slight damage reduction (5/fire).

The **Treasure** is hidden on the dead adventurer's corpse.

Creatures (EL 6): The spiders use their Hide skill to remain unseen, attacking anyone who blunders into their webs or who comes within 50 feet of the skeleton.

Three spiders can attack a Small PC, while up to four spiders can attack a Medium-size PC. The spiders live in clutches of four, each clutch making its home in the boughs or hollowed trunk of a nearby tree. They use their web-spinning ability to create web sheets, and they can use this ability as a form of direct attack (as described below).

Medium-Size Monstrous Spiders (8): CR 1; Medium-Size Vermin (4 ft. long); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +4 melee (1d6 and poison, bite); SA poison, web; SQ vermin; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +12, Hide +10, Spot +7. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA—Poison (Ex): If a spider deals damage with its bite, the target must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 12) after 1 minute or take 1d2 points of temporary Strength damage.

SA—Web (Ex): These spiders often wait in their webs or in trees, then lower themselves silently on silk strands and leap onto prey passing beneath. A single strand is strong enough to support the spider and one creature of the same size. Monstrous spiders using this trick gain a +8 competence bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks.

Web-spinning spiders can cast a web eight times a day. This is similar to an attack with a net but has a maximum range of 50 feet, with a range increment of 10 feet, and is effective against targets up to one size smaller that the spider. The web anchors the target in place, allowing no movement. An entangled creature can escape with a successful Escape Artist skill check (DC 20) or burst it with a successful Strength check (DC 26). The entangling web has 6 hit points.

SQ—Vermin: The spiders are immune to all mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, and morale effects).

Tactics: The spiders prefer to attack ensnared prey and can move through their own webs without suffering a penalty to their climb speed. PCs entangled in the webs cannot defend themselves and are treated as prone, granting the spiders a +4 circumstance bonus to attack rolls.

Treasure: The deceased adventurer wears a rusted breastplate (worthless). The small steel shield and longsword are likewise rusted. The shield shatters when struck, and the sword is good for one attack before snapping like a twig. In a purse tucked inside the adventurer's breastplate are the following coins: 60 sp, 15 gp, and 12 pp. Hidden in the adventurer's left boot is a vial containing a *potion of neutralize poison*.

K. Bats in the Willow Tree. Feel free to use this encounter if the PCs wander off the trail and become lost in the forest. Although this encounter is normally set in a small clearing north of area **J**, it can be placed anywhere in the forest.

> In a small field stands a beautiful weeping willow. The tree's fronds dip from a height of 40 feet and brush the ground. The branches are so lush that you cannot see the trunk. You imagine a space exists between the branches and trunk, maybe space big enough to walk into.

A swarm of bats lurks behind the willow fronds. When first encountered, they are sleeping. Any PC who parts the fronds to enter the space between the trunk and the hanging branches smells the disgusting odor of bat guano. The intruder also spooks the swarm, causing the bats to boil out of the tree.

Creatures (EL 2): The bat swarm is similar to a *summon swarm* spell (as described in the *PH*) except for the following effects: Weapons have little effect on the swarm, but fire or some other damaging area effect that inflicts 10 points of damage disperses the swarm. Torches caught in the swarm are instantly snuffed. Casting a spell inside the swarm requires a successful Concentration skill check (DC 25).

Bats (70): CR 1/10; Diminutive Animal (1 ft. wingspan); HD 1/4d8; hp 1 each; Spd 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 16 (+4 size, +2 Dex); Atk —; Face 1 ft. × 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SQ blindsight; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 1, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills: Listen +9, Move Silently +4, Spot +9. Bats receive a +4 racial bonus to Spot and Listen skill checks. These bonuses are lost if their blindsight is negated.

SQ—Blindsight (Ex): Bats can "see" by emitting high-frequency sounds, inaudible to most other creatures, that allow them to locate objects and creatures within 120 feet. A *silence* spell negates this and forces the bat to rely on its weak vision, which has a maximum range of 10 feet.

L. Gateway to the Swamp.

After a few miles on the trail, you glimpse a large open field. The path breaks through the trees, revealing a vast marsh. After the relative quiet of the forest, the croaks of frogs, buzzing of insects, and cries of marsh birds flood your ears. The smell of moist decay fills the air. Rushes grow as high as 8 feet in some areas, obscuring vision. To the left of the trail is an old garbage heap. Broken chairs, rotted wood, and scraps of old canvas are piled along with chunks of rusted iron, the remains of a wagon, and a handful of copper coins.

Growing atop the refuse pile but hidden beneath the discarded canvas are the **Creatures**. Scattereupon the refuse heap and intended to lure the PCs closer to the debris is the **Treasure**.

Creatures (EL 3): Disturbing the canvas exposes three shriekers. Plygar cultivated these fungi as early warning devices. Once disturbed, the shriekers emit a deafening wail that Plygar can hear from across the swamp. The two guards stationed in area **N** investigate the noise, arriving in 3 rounds. See area **N** for their statistics and tactics.

Shriekers (3): CR 1; Medium-Size Plant (4 ft. tall); HD 2d8+4; hp 13 each; Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 13 (+3 natural); Atk –; SA shriek; SQ plant; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref –, Will -4; Str –, Dex –, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 2, Cha 1.

SA–Shriek (Ex): Movement or a light source within 10 feet of a shrieker causes the fungus to emit a piercing wail that lasts for 1d3 rounds. The sound attracts nearby creatures that are disposed to investigate it.

SQ–Plant: Shriekers are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and polymorphing. They are not subject to critical hits.

Treasure: PCs searching the refuse for treasure find a measly 15 cp.

Development: If the shriekers are triggered, Plygar and his retinue cannot be caught flat-footed by the PCs.

Swamp Encounters

The following encounters are keyed to the above map. While the PCs are in the swamp, check for random encounters once every hour. Consult the "Random Encounters" table for the encounter descriptions.

M. Islands and Bridges. Read or paraphrase the following after the PCs cross the first bridge:

Approaching the first bridge, you can see a series of other bridges throughout the swamp. Some of the bridges are no more than reinforced planks extending between two land masses. Others are more elaborate though poorly constructed affairs composed of scrap wood. The small islands themselves are choked with vegetation. Reeds and rushes abound. A narrow, winding path has been cut through the reeds. Mosquitoes and gnats dance around your eyes and attempt to sting exposed flesh.

PCs must travel the paths in single file. Amid the reeds, PCs wielding Large weapons (except for scythes) suffer a -2 circumstance penalty to attack rolls.

The muddy earth halves all movement rates. PCs attempting to cross uncleared areas move at one-quarter speed. Furthermore, the swamp vegetation is damp and ignores the first 5 points of damage from any fire-based attack.

water in the swamp varies from 6 to 30 feet deep; to determine the depth in feet in any given location, roll 5d6.

Some of the bridges are actually false bridges; these are detailed under **Trap** below. The **Creatures** lurk in the swamp and attack any PC swimming or falling into the water.

The mosquitoes and gnats are nothing more than a minor nuisance. PCs who make a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 20) can find the necessary herbs to create a salve that repels such insects. Creating enough salve for four PCs requires 1 hour. Each application is good for 24 hours.

Creatures (EL 4 per catfish): Prowling the water are two giant catfish. One giant catfish claims the northern portion of the swamp (near areas **Q-T**), and the other claims the southern portion of the swamp (near areas **M-P**). Each round a PC remains in the water has a cumulative 10% chance of attracting the attention of a catfish. As the PC cannot see through the murky water of the swamp, the catfish automatically catches its prey flat-footed.

Giant Catfish (2): CR 4; Large Animal (11 ft. long); HD 7d8+14; hp 45 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd swim 60 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, bite); SA improved grab, swallow whole; Face 5 ft. × 10 ft.; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Listen +7, Spot +7.

SA—Improved Grab (Ex): If the catfish hits its opponent, it can make a grapple check (see Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH*) to grab its prey. This is typically a precursor to swallowing its prey whole (see below.)

SA—Swallow Whole (Ex): The catfish can swallow opponents it grabs with a bite attack. If it makes a second successful grapple check after a grab, it swallows its prey. The catfish can swallow only Medium-size or smaller creatures. The swallowed creature takes 1d8+2 points of crushing damage from the teeth and 2 points of acid damage per round from digestive juices. A swallowed creature can also cut its way out using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon; the gullet can take 10 points of damage (AC 15). This damage is subtracted from the catfish's total hit points as well. The catfish's gullet can hold one Medium-size, two Small, four Tiny, eight Diminutive, or sixteen Fine or smaller opponents.

Trap: Some of the bridges (as indicated on the map) are set to collapse when over 150 pounds are applied at the center. Broken bridges fall into the swamp with a wet snap, dumping PCs into the water. PCs who make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15) can leap to either the far or near shore. If the PCs maintain a tight marching order, only the PCs nearest either shore are entitled to a Reflex save; the others automatically fall into the water. The giant catfish are accustomed to waiting for prey near the bridges, and any PC who drops into the water at these points is attacked the following round.

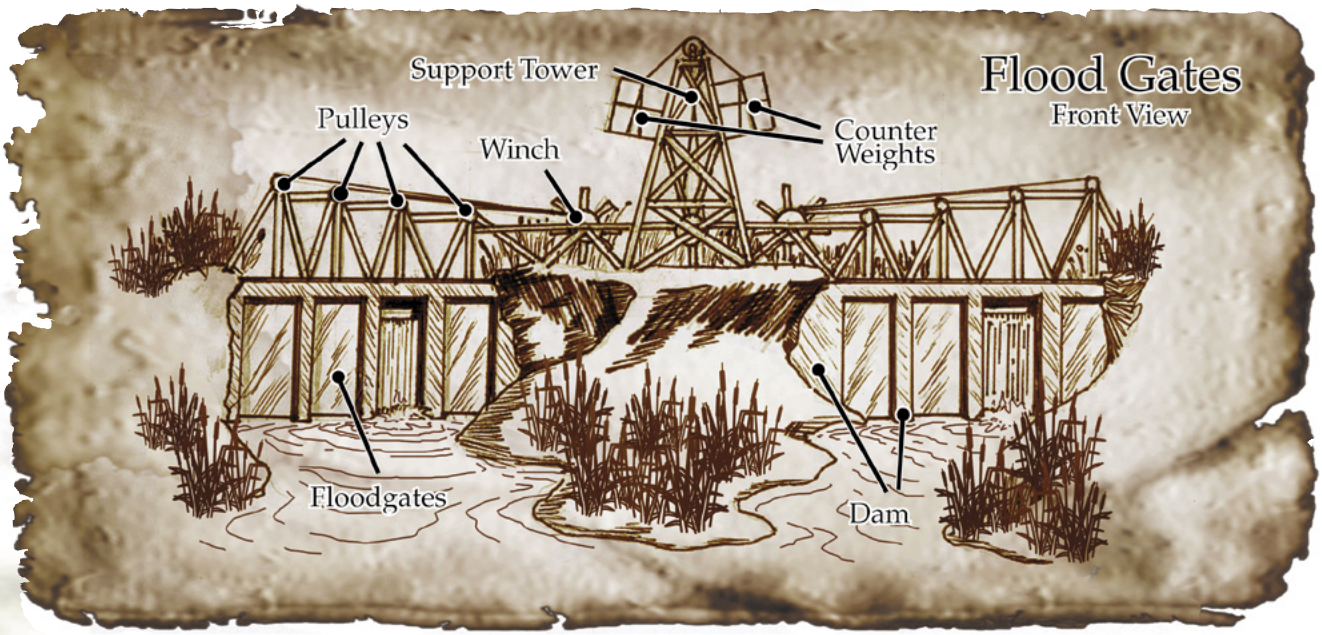
N. The Floodgates.

Half-hidden by the reeds is an elaborate set of floodgates. Although built with scrap lumber, they are clever in design. A complex series of levers and ropes operates the various gates. Someone has undercut the natural revetment that originally held the water from the swamp and built the gates to raise the level of the water in the swamp even further.

In the back of your mind, you recall that Cherry Knoll had a small rill running through the town, irrigating its fields. If this dam were destroyed or the floodgates released, the water might flood the town, no doubt ruining the harvest.

Refer to the diagram of the floodgates (below). They are designed such that when the ropes are cut, the gates fall outward. The counterweights are the only things keeping the gates from falling and releasing the surge.

PCs with the Knowledge (engineering) skill can make a skill check (DC 12) to figure out how the floodgates operate. A successful skill check also reveals the manner in which PCs can alleviate the threat to the town. Lowering the floodgates slightly can drain the swamp without damaging the town, but this takes a week. A failed Knowledge (engineering) skill check indicates that the PC cannot comprehend how the levers and



Random Encounters: The Swamp
Roll 1d12 every hour. A result of 1-6 indicates an odd find. A result of 7-12 indicates a hazard.

Odd Finds (Roll 1d4 or choose)
1. Wild Onion Patch. Growing amid the reeds is a patch of wild onions. PCs who harvest the onions are rewarded with some of the finest tasting onions in the realm. Two pounds of onions can be pulled from the soil and sold for 2 gp per pound after the prospective buyer samples the fine quality.

2. Horsemint Plant. A druid with the nature sense ability or any PC who makes a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 20) knows that this heavily scented herb aids digestion. Plygar discovered an additional benefit: If crushed into a salve and rubbed over the entire body, the giant catfish and leeches in the swamp will not come within 10 feet of the protected individual. The horsemint oil protects for 8 hours. From one plant PCs can harvest enough horsemint to make four applications (which can be sold for 1 gp per application).

3. Hawkweed. A druid with the nature sense ability or any PC who makes a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 20) knows that hawkweed is a powerful anti-toxin. Poisoned PCs who consume this plant receive the equivalent of a *delay poison* spell that lasts 4 hours. The hawkweed can also combat poisons already in effect, allowing a second Fortitude save with a +2 bonus to the roll. A hawkweed plant can be sold to an herbalist for 25 gp.

4. Starwort. This weed has tiny, star-shaped barbs and orange flowers. When the flowers are picked and mashed down into a poultice, the orange stain can be smeared over the skin and used to repel normal insects (but not those of the monstrous variety). Any druid with the nature sense ability or any PC who makes a successful Wilderness Lore skill check (DC 20) can identify the power of this plant.

Hazards (Roll 1d10 or choose)
1-2. Mosquito Cloud (EL 1). The party is attacked by a dense swarm of mosquitoes. The swarm limits vision to 10 feet, and spellcasting within the cloud is impossible. Creatures caught in the swarm, regardless of AC, sustain 1 point of damage at the end of each round they remain within. All creatures with 2 or fewer Hit Dice are driven from the cloud at their fastest possible speed in a random direction and flee until they are at least 100 feet away from the swarm. Creatures with 3 to 5 Hit Dice flee as well, though a successful Will saving throw (DC 20) negates this effect. (This urge to flee is an extraordinary fear effect.)

Heavy smoke or fire drives off the insects within its bounds.

PCs protected by starwort (see "Odd Finds" above) or some other bug-repelling substance or effect are not troubled by the mosquitoes.

3-4. Mud Hole. The first PC in the marching order must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 10) or fall into a mud hole. If the PC is within 5 feet of water, he or she falls into the water instead and might attract the attention of a giant catfish (as described in area **M**).

Extricating oneself from a mud hole requires a full-round action and a successful Strength check (DC 15). If multiple PCs help to free the fallen PC, have the strongest PC make the Strength check vs. DC 15; the other characters must make a successful Strength check vs. DC 10 to add a +2 modifier to the strongest character's roll.

The mud has no harmful effects, although it might ruin certain belongings (such as spellbooks and scrolls).

5-6. Giant Leeches (EL 2). These 2-foot-long leeches are typically encountered in the water but might also be found on the "islands" throughout the swamp.

Giant Leeches (4): CR 1/2; Small Vermin (2 ft. long); HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +0; Spd 10 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 11 (+1 size); Atk +0 melee (1, bite); SA anesthetize, blood drain, disease; SQ camouflage, salt vulnerability, vermin; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 6, Dex 10, Con 11, Int –, Wis 6, Cha 2.

Skills: Hide +8 (+12 in water), Move Silently +8.

SA—Anesthetize (Ex): If the giant leech attacks a non-aquatic creature in water, the victim might not detect the attack. The victim is entitled to a Spot skill check opposed by the leech's Hide check to notice the monster's attack. If the Spot skill check fails, the victim can make another Spot skill check (same DC) each round the leech is attached to notice it.

SA—Blood Drain (Ex): On a successful attack, the giant leech attaches itself to the victim. In each subsequent round it drains 1d2 points of temporary Constitution damage, detaching itself after draining 6 points. Victims recover lost Constitution at the normal rate.

SA—Disease (Ex): Any creature bitten by a giant leech must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or fall victim to the red ache (incubation time 1d3 days; damage 1d6 temporary Strength points).

SQ—Camouflage (Ex): Giant leeches have a +4 racial bonus to Hide checks in water due to their protective coloration.

SQ—Salt Vulnerability: A handful or more of salt deals 1d4+1 points of damage to the leech on contact and causes it to detach itself from its victim.

SQ—Vermin: The giant leeches are immune to all mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, and morale effects).

7-8. Stirges (EL 3). These stirges feed on mosquitoes, snakes, toads, and other small swamp denizens, but they don't miss any chance to draw blood from larger prey and attack the PCs on sight.

Stirges (6): CR 1/2; Tiny Beast (1 ft. long); HD 1d10; hp 5 each; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (average); AC 16 (+2 size, +4 Dex); Atk +6 melee (1d3, touch); Face 2 1/2 ft. × 2 1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SA attach, blood drain; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 19, Con 10, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skill: Hide +14. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (touch).

SA—Attach (Ex): If a stirge hits with a touch attack, it uses its eight pincers to latch onto the opponent's body. An attached stirge has an AC of 12.

SA—Blood Drain (Ex): A stirge drains blood, dealing 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round it remains attached. Once it has drained 4 points of Constitution, it detaches and flies off to digest the meal.

9-10. Giant Bees (EL 4). Loud buzzing foreshadows the arrival of two giant bees. The bees investigate first and attack only if the PCs threaten them.

Giant Bees (2): hp 11 each; see area **P** for complete statistics.

winches work. PCs who randomly cut ropes might release the surge, with a 20% cumulative chance for each rope cut. Plygar plans to cut the ropes himself once he has the bejeweled eye in his possession.

Guarding the floodgates are two warriors charmed by Plygar. (See **Creatures** below.) The guards stand next to the winches that raise and lower the floodgates.

Creatures (EL 3): Fredrick and Porlow are members of Janne's caravan. If the *charm* is dispelled, they gladly lead the PCs to Plygar's hideaway and warn them about the other charmed members of their caravan.

Fredrick is 30 years old, bald, burly, and tanned. Porlow is 21 years old, narrowly built, and has scruffy brown hair. He has a jagged scar on his left cheek—the result of a broken bottle in the hands of an angry barmaid.

Fredrick, Human Male War2 (charmed): CR 2; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 2d8; hp 12; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (10 ft. in swamp); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail armor); Atk +4 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword), +3 ranged (1d8/ crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Handle Animal +1, Ride +3, Swim +3. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Chainmail, longsword, light crossbow with 10 bolts, 12 gp in pouch.

Porlow, Human Male War1 (charmed): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 1d8; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (10 ft. in swamp); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail armor); Atk +2 melee (1d8+1/crit ×3, shortspear), +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +0; AL N; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Jump +2, Ride +2, Swim +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (shortspear).

Possessions: Chainmail, shortspear, light crossbow with 10 bolts, 4 gp in pouch.

Tactics: If attacked with ranged weapons, the guards use the winches for one-half cover, granting them a +4 bonus to AC and a +2 bonus to Reflex saving throws. The surrounding reeds also afford three-quarters concealment, resulting in a 30% miss chance for all ranged attacks. PCs using the reeds to conceal themselves also benefit from this miss chance. (See the "Cover" and "Concealment" rules in the Chapter 8: Combat in the *PH*.)

O. Lair of the Frogs.

You come to a crossroads in the trail. The center area has been trampled down, and a half dozen oddly shaped boulders are strewn about.

The boulders are, in fact, monstrous frogs. If the PCs approach the boulders (or attempt to walk past them) without taking any special precautions, they are caught flat-footed as the frogs attack. Because of their nature sense ability, druids automatically see the "boulders" for what they are and cannot be caught flat-footed by the frogs. A druid can also warn his or her companions of the danger to prevent the frogs from gaining surprise, in which case initiative is handled normally.

Creatures (EL 5): The monstrous frogs can leap at any PCs within 60 feet, regardless of marching order. PCs who are not caught flat-footed gain an attack of opportunity as the frogs leap into threatened areas. The giant frogs can leap 60 feet forward or 15 feet straight up, but they cannot jump backward or to either side. The frogs fear open flames and always retreat from them.

Medium-Size Monstrous Frogs (6): CR 1; Medium-Size Animal (4 ft. long); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6, bite); SA leap, adhesive tongue; SQ low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 14, Cha 4.

Skills: Jump (see below), Listen +4, Spot +4, Swim +6. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (tongue).

SA—Leap (Ex): A monstrous frog can leap up to 60 feet horizontally (15 feet vertically) and attack with its bite. This is treated as a charge (+2 bonus to the attack roll, -2 penalty to AC). To leap, the monstrous frog must be at least 10 feet from its target.

SA—Adhesive Tongue (Ex): A monstrous frog within 20 feet of its prey lashes out with its sticky tongue instead of leaping, striking with a +2 bonus

(granted by the Weapon Finesse feat). Tongue attacks deal no damage and are treated as grappling attacks except that they do not provoke attacks of opportunity. If a giant frog successfully snares its prey with its tongue, it is automatically drawn into the frog's mouth the following round and bitten (no attack roll required). If the tongue is struck (AC 15) for any amount of damage, the frog releases the victim and does not attack that PC again.

These monstrous frogs cannot use their tongues to reel in prey of Large size or bigger.

P. Giant Bees' Nest.

In the center of this reed island is a small clearing. Six 2-foot-diameter holes have been dug into the ground. They appear to be burrows.

If the PCs explore the clearing, the **Creatures** emerge from the holes and attack. Subtract from this number any giant bees that the PCs have already slain as wandering creatures.

Creatures (EL 5): This island is home to four giant bees (a Medium-size cousin of the larger giant wasp).

Medium-Size Giant Bees (4): CR 2; Medium-Size Vermin (4 ft. long); HD 2d8+2; hp 11 each; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., 60 ft. (good); AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1 and poison, sting), +1 melee (1d4, bite); SA poison; SQ vermin; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 12, Int —, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Intuit Direction +7, Spot +9.

SA—Poison (Ex): Any PC stung by a giant bee must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or take 1d6 points of temporary Dexterity damage; after 1 minute, the stung PC must make a second Fortitude saving throw (same DC) or take another 1d6 points of temporary Dexterity damage.

SQ—Vermin: The giant bees are immune to all mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, and morale effects).

Q. Gargoyle Statue.

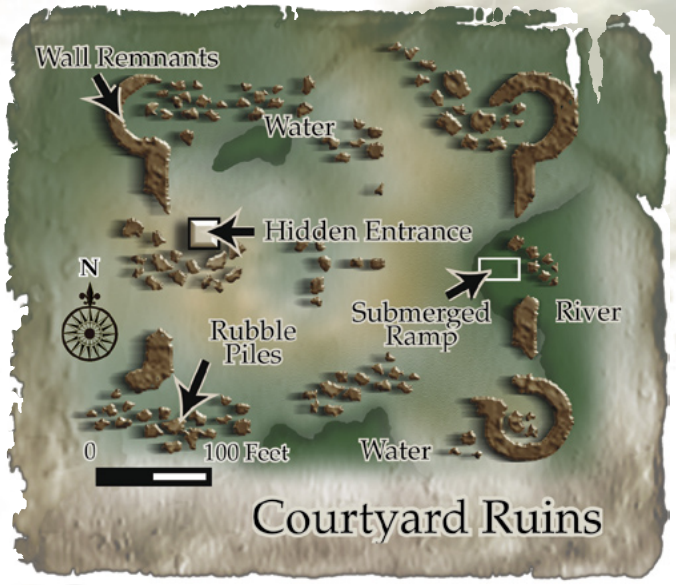
Half buried in the mud is a gargoylish statue with broken wings and sharp talons. The statue's fanged mouth is hollow. A red-winged blackbird has built a small nest in this orifice.

The "statue" is one of the stone gargoyles that used to grace the roof of Radeem's stronghold. This particular one was actually a rainspout. The gargoyle is nothing more than a harmless statue, and the blackbird flees if the PCs attack or approach. The nest is currently empty.

PCs who lift the 100-lb. gargoyle find the **Treasure**.

Treasure: Plygar has hidden a varnished wooden coffer beneath the gargoyle. The coffer is unlocked and sealed against the dampness; contained within are two *potions of cure moderate wounds* that Plygar keeps for emergencies.

Development: If Plygar is wounded but manages to flee his attackers, he tips over the gargoyle, opens the coffer, and drinks one or both of the potions within.



R. Rusted Battering Ram.

A large lump of rusted and pitted metal protrudes from the muddy ground. Rusted pins, each two fingers thick, extend through the back of the object.

Closer scrutiny allows PCs to identify the object as the head of an ancient battering ram—a remnant of the battle that ultimately felled Radeem's stronghold.

S. Ruins of Radeem's Stronghold.

Jutting from the placid water of the swamp are the ruins of a stronghold. Great walls made of dark stone have been cast down, and only a few portions of wall and partially collapsed spires extend above the waterline. The entire ruin is surrounded by water.

Once the swamp is drained, the PCs can explore the ruins, possibly locating a ramp in center courtyard that leads down to a locked and sealed iron door (area **S1**). Plygar stumbled upon the key to this door and has it in his possession.

The water around the stronghold varies in depth, as detailed in area **M**.

Exploring the Ruins (Areas S1-S12)

Once the swamp is drained and the water has receded, PCs can access the chambers beneath the ruins of Radeem's stronghold through a hidden door (area **S1**) or ramp (area **S12**). Although exploring the ruins is not required to complete their mission, PCs who thwart Plygar and obtain his iron key might be tempted to explore the dungeons below the stronghold.

S1. Courtyard and Iron Door.

The towers, inner buildings, and walls of this once impressive stronghold now lay in ruin. Giant piles of rubble choke the courtyard, which is awash in standing pools of water and muck.

A thorough search of the area reveals a half-buried iron door leading below. Clearing the door of mud and debris requires several minutes.

The door is locked and stuck. Plygar's iron key opens the lock, or PCs can unlock the door with a successful Open Lock skill check (DC 20), but a successful Strength check (DC 28) is still required to pull it open. PCs can also use a *knock* spell to open the door.

Opening the door reveals a set of stairs leading down. Although the walls and ceiling are damp and cold to the touch, the area is clear of mud.

Locked Iron Door: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28; Open Lock DC 20.

S2. Elemental Door.

The stairs descend to a 25-foot-long corridor that travels eastward and ends abruptly at a stone wall. Mounted next to the wall is a bronze panel engraved with strange runes. Four iron levers, each marked with a different elemental symbol, protrude from the panel.

The symbols engraved on the lever are simple representations of the four elements (air, earth, fire, and water, in that order). The iron levers cannot be detached from the bronze panel, nor can the panel be removed from the wall.

Radeem's steward devised this door to allow entry only to those familiar with Radeem's wicked past. The inscription on the bronze panel is written in Elven and reads, *"Only those who know of the master's magic may pass unharmed. Which of the four elements did mighty Radeem call upon to subjugate the ogres of the Bonebreaker clan?"*

An accurate chronicle of Radeem's exploits and accomplishments can be found in Plygar's hovel (area **T**). History tells that Radeem subjugated the ogres using Earth magic (specifically, an *earthquake* spell cast from a scroll). Thus, the correct answer to the riddle is "Earth." To get past the stone door, the PCs must pull down the earth lever. Pulling one of the other levers triggers the **Trap**.

The stone block that seals the entrance to the dungeons was designed to slide into the north wall when the correct lever is pulled. The block rests atop a series of stone gears and rollers that don't allow the block to be forcefully pushed aside. The door remains open for 10 rounds. PCs on the east side can open the stone block by pulling a single iron lever mounted to the adjacent wall.

Trap (EL 3): Pulling down the air, fire, or water lever unleashes a flesh-corroding gas that fills the lower hallway in front of the stone door. The gas issues forth from cracks in the corridor walls and tiny holes in the levers themselves. Those within the area of effect who fail a Fortitude saving throw (DC 17) take 3d8 points of damage each round they remain in the cloud; those who make a successful saving throw sustain half damage. The gas remains for 10 rounds. The trap can be triggered three times before the gas supply is depleted.

Poison Gas Trap: CR 3; 3d8 points of damage; Fortitude save (DC 17) halves damage; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 28).

S3. Leaking Corridor.

The mortar sealing the wall stones has eroded in this 10-foot-high corridor. Water and muck have seeped through the cracks, creating a small stream that travels the length of the hallway.

This corridor is damp and dark, but otherwise featureless. As the PCs move within 30 feet of area **S4**, they detect the foul stench of rotting flesh.

S4. Briefing Room.

A large table littered with fragments of parchment stands in the center of this 30-foot-square room, the northernmost walls of which are lined with moldy tapestries depicting some kind of map. Five shambling figures mill about the chamber. One of them wears the rotted silk garments of a steward, while three others wear rusty chainmail over tattered military uniforms. Behind them looms a monstrous ogre with gaping sores dressed in filthy leather armor adorned with tarnished brass studs.

When the **Creatures** detect the PCs, they attack. The tapestries and pieces of parchment on the table are described under **Treasure** below.

Creatures (EL 3): Five zombies dwell here. The zombie steward and the three zombies in chainmail are human and attack with their claws. The ogre zombie wields a greataxe.

Human Zombies (4): CR 1/2; Medium-Size Undead; HD 2d12+3 (includes the Toughness feat); hp 16 each; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural) or 16 (-1 Dex, +2 natural, +5 chainmail armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); SQ undead, partial actions only; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3.

Feat: Toughness.

SQ—Undead: Zombies are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

SQ—Partial Actions Only (Ex): Zombies have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or attack, but not both in the same round.

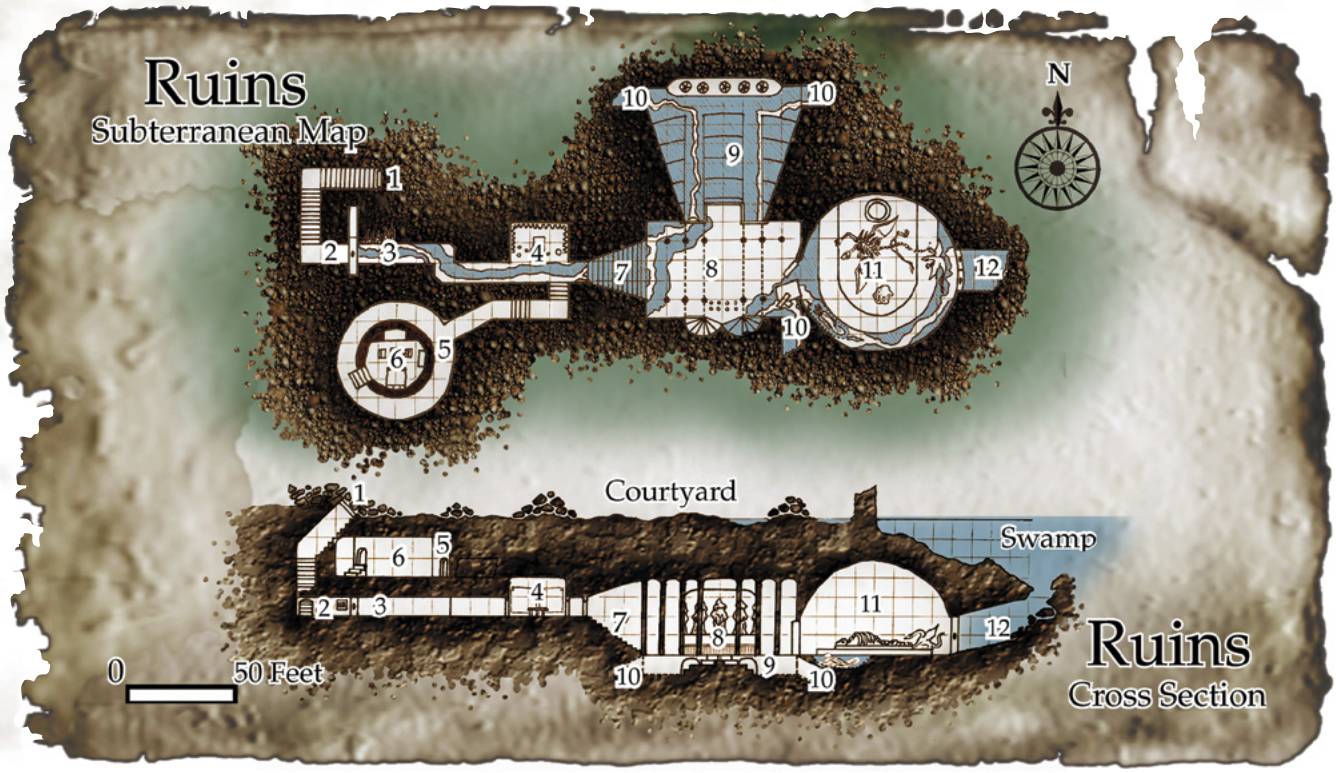
Ogre Zombie (1): CR 1; Large Undead; HD 4d12+3 (includes the Toughness feat); hp 29; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +3 natural, +3 studded leather armor); Atk +4 melee (1d12+4/crit ×3, greataxe) or +4 melee (1d8+4, slam); Reach 10 ft.; SQ undead (see above), partial actions only (see above); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 17, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 3.

Feat: Toughness.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, greataxe.

Treasure: Four 15 ft. × 15 ft. tapestries adorn the walls. Together they depict a large-scale map of the realm. They weigh 50 lbs. apiece and are worth 50 gp each (or 200 gp for the set), even in their poor condition. PCs inspecting the papers on the table find some ancient battle plans and two arcane scrolls (*endurance* and *displacement*).

Development: You can use the tapestry-maps as springboards for further adventures by having a few "lost" locations indicated on the maps. Among the places of interest are the



former lairs of the Bonebreaker ogres and the Rotting Claw gnoll tribe, as well as other places visited or plundered by Radeem.

S5. Thaumaturgic Circle.

Climbing a pair of short stairwells, you reach a corridor that curves away in two directions. The floor of these curving passages are covered with intricate runes. The ruins are made of multicolored sand painstakingly poured into narrow grooves.

A successful Spellcraft skill check (DC 15) is needed to recognize the runes as components of a thaumaturgic circle—a means to trap or drive away outsiders (extra-planar beings). Walking down either branch of the circular corridor or otherwise disturbing the sand destroys the circle, releasing Thurra the half-fiend from her imprisonment in area **S6**.

S6. Thurra's Chamber.

The two circular branches of the corridor join at the base of a short staircase leading up to an open archway. Soft firelight glows from within.

The 15-foot-high chamber beyond contains a canopied bed, an ornate marble bath, a table with a game board atop it, a mahogany wardrobe, and a stone hearth. Sitting quietly next to the fireplace, playing the game, is a sad but beautiful woman. When she moves, her dark hair falls aside, revealing small horns. Batlike wings spread out behind her as she slowly stands. "Finally," she says. "After all these years, people to talk to."

The woman is Radeem's untrustworthy half-fiend concubine, Thurra. To ensure that she would not flee in his absence, Radeem created the thaumaturgic circle to confine her. Although Radeem provided many creature comforts for his mistress, he never realized that she had, in fact, fallen in love with him. When Thurra's mother (a succubus) learned of this forbidden love, she banished Thurra from Hell. Thurra is still devoted to Radeem and desperately wishes to know his whereabouts. Her reaction to the PCs is detailed more fully in the **Tactics** section below.

The fireplace is actually a *permanent image*, creating the perception of both heat and light. The more precious contents of the room are detailed under **Treasure** below.

Creature (EL 7): Thurra has reddish-copper skin, small horns jutting from her forehead, and batlike wings that enable her to fly.

Thurra, Female Half-fiend/Half-human Rog3/Sor2: CR 7; Medium-Size Outsider (Evil, Chaotic); HD 3d6+6 (Rog) plus 2d4+4 (Sor); hp 26; Init +6 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 17 (+6 Dex, +1 natural) or 21 (+6 Dex, +1 natural, +4 mage armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, bite), or +4 melee (1d4+1/1d4+1, claws); or +5 melee (1d4+3/crit 17-20, *+1 keen dagger*); SA spell-like abilities, sneak attack +2d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., fiendish resistances, evasion, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +6 (includes +2 for Iron Will feat); Str 14, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 17, Wis 11, Cha 19.

Skills: Bluff +9, Concentration +7, Decipher Script +7, Diplomacy +8, Escape Artist +12, Hide +12, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +12, Open Lock +9, Pick Pocket +11, Read Lips +7, Search +8, Spellcraft +6, Spot +5, Tumble +12. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Iron Will.

Spells (6/5 per day, chosen from the following list): 0—*daze, disrupt undead, ghost sound, ray of frost, read magic*; 1st—*change self, chill touch, mage armor*

SA—Spell-like Abilities (Sp): Thurra can use the following spell-like abilities at 5th level: *darkness* 3/day, *desecrate* 1/day, and *unholy blight* 1/day.

SA—Sneak Attack (Ex): Any time Thurra's target would be denied its Dexterity bonus to AC (or when she flanks the target), Thurra's attack deals an extra 2d6 points of damage. See Chapter 3: Classes in the *PH* for details.

SQ—Fiendish Resistances (Su): Thurra is immune to poison and has acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance 20 (meaning that the first 20 points of damage dealt by an acid-, cold-, electrical-, or fire-based attack against Thurra is ignored).

SQ—Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a Reflex saving throw for half damage, Thurra takes no damage with a successful saving throw.

SA—Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Thurra retains her Dexterity bonus to AC regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

Possessions: +1 keen dagger (a gift from Radeem), gold ankle bracelet set with three small rubies (worth 1,560 gp).

Tactics: After introducing herself to the PCs, Thurra inquires about Radeem and his current whereabouts. If the PCs claim to know nothing about the wizard or his location, Thurra suspects that they might be enemies who have come to plunder Radeem's lair during the wizard's absence. She refuses to believe that Radeem is dead. (He was, after all, a powerful wizard who had magically prolonged his life on several occasions.) If the PCs cannot justify their presence in Radeem's stronghold and assure Thurra that they are not Radeem's enemies (with a successful Bluff skill check against DC 25), Thurra commands them to leave the stronghold at once and "never return," attacking those who do not comply.

Before entering melee, she likes to cast *mage armor* on herself followed by *unholy blight* and *darkness*. In melee combat, she wields her *+1 keen dagger*. She dislikes attacking with her natural weapons (too unseemly) and bites and claws opponents only if driven into a rage or reduced to half her hit points.

If she is reduced to 6 hit points or fewer, Thurra tries to flee, grabbing the *dimension door* scroll in area **S9** and using it to transport to the surface. She does not wander far from the stronghold, knowing that her lover could return at any moment to crush the unwanted interlopers. If the PCs agree to leave the ruins, Thurra allows them to depart unmolested. Once she is freed from her captivity and left alone, she grows bored waiting for Radeem; after one day of freedom, she leaves the stronghold in search of her lost love and does not return. However, before leaving she casts *desecrate* in area **S8** (to make the skeletons there tougher, as described in the *desecrate* spell's description) and wakes the very young black dragons in area **S11**.

Treasure: Searching the wardrobe reveals a small ebony box containing a set of silver barber tools (worth 15 gp) and three richly embroidered silk robes (worth 25 gp each). Also stashed in the wardrobe is cork-stoppered glass bottle containing a *potion of protection from elements (acid).*

Four jade ornaments, carved in the shape of dolphins (and worth 75 gp each), can be easily pried from the bedposts.

Lying atop the game table are 34 handsomely carved, light wooden playing cards adorned with numerals and human figures (royalty, knights, wizards, bishops, and nobles). The peculiar card game, called Ryzaq, can be sold for 10 gp to someone interested in novelty items.

S7. The Slippery Stairway.

A broad, mud-washed stairway widens as it descends and opens into a large, unlit chamber.

Beneath the mud, marble tiles cover the stone steps. The smooth surface combined with the water and mud makes footing treacherous. See **Trap** below.

Trap (EL 1/4): PCs who descend the stairs without bracing themselves must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 12) or slip and fall. Those who fall take 1d4 points of damage. PCs who fall while wearing metal armor or with weapons in their hands make a tremendous racket that awakens the two black dragons in area **S11**.

S8. The Great Hall.

The stairway opens into a vast, marble-tiled chamber. Intricately carved pillars support the ceiling 40 feet above. The great hall ends at a pair of huge, shattered stone doors. One door hangs on its hinges, and the other lays smashed on the floor. Twin spiral stairways set into the south wall lead down into darkness, while to the north a balcony enclosed by an ornate stone railing overlooks a sunken auditorium. The stream of water and muck spills from the hall, through the gaps in the railing, and down into the dark auditorium.

Eight skeletons wearing faded guard uniforms and tarnished chainmail stand in tight formation near the spiral stairways. They clutch short swords.

This grand hall was where Radeem inspired his troops. If the skeletons are disturbed or approached within 20 feet, they attack (as described under **Creatures** below). The balcony overlooking area **S9** is explained in the **Trap** section.

The spiral staircases descend to a pair of corridors 10 feet below this chamber. The corridors pass underneath the floor of this room and open into area **S9**. The hallways are dark and filled with 6 feet of muddy water, but otherwise they are featureless.

Creatures (EL 3): The eight skeletons are the animated remnants of Radeem's elite guards. They fight until successfully turned or destroyed.

Human Skeletons (8): CR 1/3; Medium-Size Undead (6 ft. tall); HD 1d12; hp 10 each; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +0 melee (1d4/1d4, claws); SD undead immunities (see below); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2; AL N; Str 10, Dex 12, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

SD—Undead Immunities (Ex): Skeletons are immune to cold-based attacks. They are not damaged by piercing weapons and take only half damage from slashing weapons. They are also immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. They are not subject to critical hits, subdual, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Trap (EL 1/4): The posts that support the balcony have eroded, and the balcony collapses under 250 lbs. of weight. PCs on the balcony when it collapses must make a successful Reflex saving throw (DC 15) or fall 10 feet to the water-filled auditorium floor, taking 1d4 points of damage. They are also attacked the following round by the monsters in area **S9**. PCs

who roll a natural 1 on their Reflex saving throw lose whatever items they were holding; these items fall into the murky water, and a successful Search skill check (DC 12) is needed to find them; PCs can take 20 on this roll if they are not in combat.

S9. Auditorium.

Five 20-foot-tall statues placed atop a prominent ledge dominate the rear of this enormous, wedge-shaped room. The statues depict large, robed humanoids in heavy cowls. Mud and water fill the room to a depth of 6 feet. Numerous half-submerged corpses are strewn about the chamber, and giant multilegged insects crawl about the muck.

Sixty of Radeem's elite soldiers were kept here in stasis, awaiting their master's return. They did not awaken when the water and mud began seeping into the chamber, and they drowned. The room is currently inhabited by the **Creatures**.

Submerged beneath 6 feet of water and mud are several rows of rotting wooden benches angled so that they face the statues positioned atop the 20-foot-high northern ledge. The statues are meant to depict Radeem and four other powerful wizards, although their features are obscured by stone cloaks and cowls. Hidden behind the middle statue is the **Treasure**, which is protected by the **Trap**.

Creatures (EL 3): Seven monstrous centipedes feed on the carrion in this room. However, they prefer live prey and attack any PCs who violate their lair or disturb its contents.

Medium-Size Monstrous Centipedes (7): CR 1/2; Medium-Size Vermin; HD 1d8; hp 4 each; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +2 melee (1d6-1 and poison, bite); SA poison; SQ vermin; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +7, Spot +7. *Feat:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA—Poison (Ex): Any PC bitten by a centipede must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 11) after 1 minute or take 1d2 points of temporary Dexterity damage.

SQ—Vermin: The centipedes are immune to all mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, and morale effects).

Treasure: Hidden behind the middle statue, set into the floor of the ledge, is a 1 ft. × 1 ft. × 1 ft. secret compartment. Finding the compartment requires a successful Search skill check (DC 15), but once found the compartment is easily opened. Tucked inside are a few items Radeem kept hidden for emergencies: a *wand of invisibility* (16 charges remaining), a *potion of spider climb*, and an arcane scroll (*dimension door*) in a hollow bone sealed with wax.

Trap (EL 0): Radeem cast a *Leomund's trap* spell upon the secret compartment holding the **Treasure**. Intended to discourage thieves, the spell has no genuinely harmful effects.

S10. Mud-choked Passages.

After only a few feet, this downward-sloping hall becomes completely choked with mud and debris.

These blocked passages are provided for DMs who wish to expand the dungeon.

S11. Dragons' Lair.

This huge, roughly hemispherical chamber has a smooth, 50-foot-high ceiling. Tiered floors lead to a raised central area, upon which the gigantic skeleton of a winged reptile rests. A 10-foot-diameter, bowl-shaped depression is carved into the highest tier, adjacent to the north wall. You also spot a pile of scales and loose coins atop the dais. The southern rim of the chamber is flooded with murky water of unknown depth. A carrion stench pervades the chamber.

This was once the lair of Radeem's prized pet, an adult black dragon named Crishka. While waiting for Radeem to return, Crishka died, but not before rearing her young. Her children, named Elgeth and Rath, have sustained themselves by devouring their mother's dead flesh, dissolving through her thick scales with their corrosive acid. All that remains of Crishka are bones, and the young dragons are hungry for warm meat. Once awakened, they attack as described under **Tactics** below.

The bowl-shaped indentation carved out of the highest tier is currently empty but magically fills with carrion once per month. Blood and entrails line the sides of the "bowl."

The heap of coins is detailed under **Treasure** below.

Creatures (EL 6): The male black dragon is named Elgeth, the female Rath.

Very Young Black Dragons (2): CR 4; Small Dragon (4 ft. long plus tail); HD 7d12+7; hp 49 each; Init +0; Spd 60 ft., fly 100 ft. (average), swim 60 ft.; AC 17 (+1 size, +6 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, bite), +4 melee (1d4/1d4, claws); SA breath weapon; SQ immunities, water breathing, blindsight, darkvision 200 ft; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Bluff +4, Escape Artist +7, Listen +12 (includes Alertness feat), Search +10, Spot +12 (includes Alertness feat). *Feat:* Alertness.

SA—Breath Weapon (Su): The black dragons breathe a line of acid 5 feet high, 5 feet wide, and 40 feet long. The acid deals 4d4 points of damage or half if a Reflex saving throw (DC 14) is successful. Once a dragon breathes, it must wait 1d4 rounds before it can do so again.

SQ—Immunities (Ex): Black dragons are immune to acid, sleep, and paralysis.

SQ—Water Breathing (Ex): The dragons can breathe underwater indefinitely and can freely use must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 11) after 1 minute or take 1d2 points of temporary Dexterity damage.

SQ—Blindsight (Ex): A dragon can ascertain creatures by nonvisual means (mostly hearing and scent, but also by noticing vibration and other environmental clues) with a range of 60 feet.

Tactics: Rath sleeps in a murky pool of water against the south wall, hidden from plain sight. Elgeth sleeps in the eastern portion of the chamber, behind the skeletal remains of her deceased mother. Both young dragons sleep most of the day but awaken to the sound of loud noises from area **S8** or **S9** or the sound of intruders entering their domicile. PCs who make a successful Hide skill check (DC 15) followed by a successful Move Silently skill check (DC 15) can enter the room without awakening the dragons. Once the dragons are awake and alert, however, all Hide checks are made against the dragon's Spot skill checks, while all Move Silently skill checks are opposed by the dragons' Listen skill checks.

Once intruders are detected, Elgeth emerges from behind the dead dragon and tries to lure PCs into the room, using the tiers and her mother's rotting corpse as one-half cover (+4 to AC, +2 to Reflex saving throws) and enabling her brother Rath to catch the PCs flat-footed. As the PCs converge on Elgeth, Rath rises from the murky pool behind them, cutting off their escape. The two dragons then pounce on their nearest foes, tearing with their teeth and claws and spewing horrible acid every 1d4 rounds.

The dragons are infants, and their tactics are fairly straightforward. Even if one of them is killed, the other fights savagely to the bitter end.

Treasure: In a small pile atop the uppermost tier are 2,500 gp, 7,450 sp, and 9,000 cp.

S12. Dragons' Exit Ramp. The 20-foot-high stone doors embedded in the eastern wall of the dragons' lair are stuck. No handles protrude to gain purchase, so opening them is even more difficult. A *knock* spell opens the doors, or they can be smashed open. Water leaks from the top of the doors, forming a pool at the base of the portal.

Huge Stone Doors: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 100; Break DC 40.

Development: If the swamp has not been drained, PCs who manage to open the doors unleash a torrent of water that completely floods the dungeon within 30 rounds and drains the nearby swamp. (This also reduces the pressure on the floodgates in area **N** and foils Plygar's scheme to unleash a torrent on the unsuspecting town of Cherry Knoll.) The black dragons, undead, and giant centipedes occupying the dungeon are unaffected by the flooding. The water also breaks the spell that binds Thurra, at which point she flees the dungeon. Once clear, she tries to find out who or what was responsible for the flooding. If she discovers the PCs, she confronts them as described in area **S6**.

PCs within 60 feet of the doors are automatically caught by the deluge of water and are slammed for 1d6 points of damage. PCs who can hold their breath and are not encumbered can swim up the ramp to the surface (or back through the dungeon) once the torrent subsides.

T. Plygar's Hovel.

A wooden shack has been assembled in the swamp. Most of the building is set on stilts, hovering a foot over the waterline. The fieldstone chimney attached to the hovel has been built on one of the small islands adjacent to the shack. Moss-covered shingles tile the roof. The shack is composed of mismatched pieces of scrap lumber. Cheesecloth covers the windows and cracks between the boards to keep out the larger insects. A porch partially surrounds the hovel and is littered with firewood. Picks and shovels lay near a door that is really no more than a rickety set of old wagon buckboards lashed together. Several figures stand on the porch.

A 4-foot-high wall of piled stones has been built at the head of a connecting bridge, on the left side. This primitive fortification appears unmanned.

If the PCs reach the hovel without creating too much noise, Plygar and his charmed guards are taken by surprise. (Have the PCs make Move Silently and Hide skill checks, opposed by the guards' Listen and Spot skill checks respectively, to reach the island's bridge undetected.) If surprised, three Clover Trade Company guards are standing on the porch; they were recently sprayed by a skunk and are not allowed inside until they air out. The remainder of Plygar's group, including Plygar himself, are inside the shack.

Near the bridge is a 4-foot-tall half-wall of neatly piled stones. Crouched down behind the half-wall, polishing his longsword or cleaning his crossbow, is the charmed leader of the caravan guards, Khelsor. If warned that intruders are approaching, Khelsor uses the half-wall as cover while shooting bolts at any PCs attempting to cross the bridge. The half-wall provides a +7 bonus to AC and a +3 bonus to Reflex saving throws.

If one or more PCs make it across the bridge, Khelsor leaps out with sword in hand and tries to hold the PCs at bay while the guards on the bridge shoot their crossbows. (They suffer a -4 penalty to their attack rolls for firing into melee.)

If Ontho and Laisis (see area **A**) made it back to Plygar's shack, they are among the guards present.

Creatures (EL 6): Janne is a small but attractive young woman, 32 years old, with raven-black hair and green eyes. She fights only to defend herself or Plygar. Armed with a dagger, she guards the entrance to the shack until Plygar makes good his escape.

Janne Clover, Female Human Exp2 (charmed): CR 1; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 2d6-2; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (15 ft. in swamp); AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 9, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +6 (includes Skill Focus feat), Diplomacy +6 (includes Skill Focus feat), Gather Information +5, Handle Animal +3, Profession (merchant) +5, Move Silently +2, Ride +5, Sense Motive +3, Swim +2. *Feats:* Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

Possessions: Dagger with a 100-gp topaz set in its pommel, 25 gp in pouch.

Clover Trading Company Guards, Male Human War1 (8) (charmed): CR 1; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 1d8; hp 6 each; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (10 ft. in swamp); AC 14 (-1 Dex, +5 chainmail armor); Atk +2 melee (1d8+1/crit 19-20, longsword), +2 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +0; AL N; Str 12, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Jump +2, Ride +2, Swim +2. *Feats:* Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: Chainmail, longsword, light crossbow with 10 bolts, 2d6 gp in pouch.

Khelsor served as a soldier and mercenary before joining the Clover Trading Company. He is 48 years old with cropped, slate-gray hair and a rugged complexion.

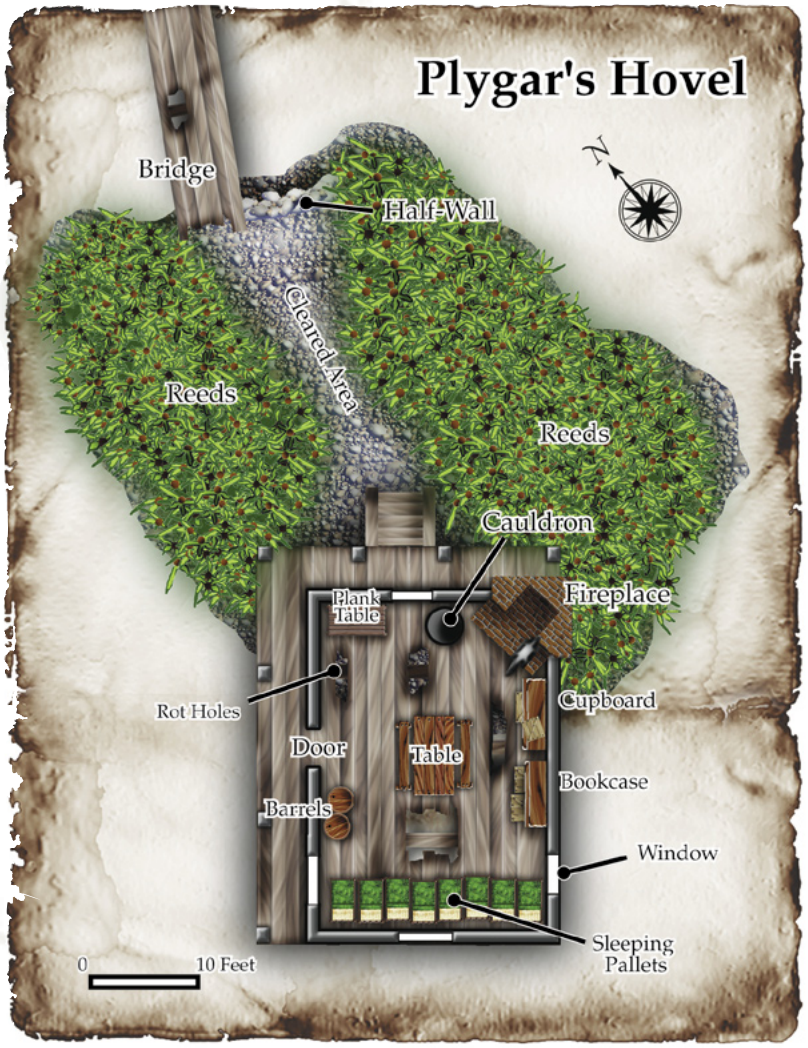
Khelsor Stormdancer, Male Human Ftr3 (charmed): CR 3; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 11 in.); HD 3d10+3; hp 28; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (10 ft. in swamp); AC 16 (+5 chainmail armor, +1 small shield); Atk +6 melee (1d8+1d6+3/crit 19-20, *+1 shock longsword*) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19-20, light crossbow); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +1 AL N; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Possessions: Chainmail, small steel shield, *+1 shock longsword* (see **Treasure** below), light crossbow with 12 bolts, 20 gp in pouch.

Skills: Climb +5, Handle Animal +3, Ride +3, Swim +5. *Feats:* Cleave, Improved Initiative, Mounted Combat, Power Attack.

Tactics: The charmed caravan guards have orders to protect Plygar. They are also predisposed to protect Janne, their true leader.

When fighting opponents in light armor, Khelsor uses his Power Attack feat to transfer part of his base melee attack modifier to his melee damage rolls; in such cases, subtract 2 from his melee attack modifier and add 2 to his melee damage modifier. He also uses his Cleave feat whenever the opportunity presents itself.



If his charm is dispelled, Khelsor immediately turns against Plygar, helping the PCs any way he can. His first loyalty is to Janne, however, and Khelsor never leaves her undefended.

Treasure: Khelsor's blade is a unique magic item. The entire length of the sword is etched with fanciful scrollwork. The hilt and pommel are wrapped in blue dragon hide. The blade, Seciril (named after an infamous blue dragon), has been passed down through generations of his family, although it was originally forged for a king. (The king had been usurped and killed before the blade was finished.) Legends claim that whoever wields Seciril in battle is doomed to a short life; although previous wielders died at a relatively young age (fighting in great wars), there is no actual curse on the blade.

In addition to the regular damage (1d8+1), the *+1 longsword* crackles with electricity on a successful strike, dealing an extra 1d6 points of damage to the smitten target.

Inside the Shack

If Plygar is expecting intruders, he jams the door with a small bookcase. Breaking down the door requires a successful Strength check (DC 15), and PCs can use the "Aid Another" rule in the *PH* to help one another.

When the PCs first enter the shack, read or paraphrase the following:

Symbol of the False Prophet

This unique amulet was created by an unscrupulous wizard for a rogue charlatan. The huckster used the item to charm people and later deprive them of their money. The item resembles a holy symbol depicting a chain of five speckled green stones, the largest of which is etched with a red lightning bolt. (This is not the holy symbol of any known god.) The symbol weighs 1 pound and hangs on an ornate steel chain.

The Symbol of the False Prophet is a nonrechargeable magic item that allows its user to cast *mass charm* (as the spell). The item has 4 charges remaining and cannot be recharged.

Using the *mass charm* ability requires the wearer to first utter the command phrase, "People, hear my words." The power automatically fails against targets who cannot hear or understand the words. It also has no effect on creatures immune to mind-influencing magic.

The amulet can charm up to 32 total levels or Hit Dice, and the effect persists for 16 days or until dispelled. A successful Will saving throw (DC 18) negates the charm. Just like the *charm person* spell, the *mass charm* ability of the amulet cannot be used to compel affected creatures to act against their natures or perform suicidal tasks. Such instructions immediately break the wearer's hold over those so commanded.

Caster Level: 16th
Prerequisites: Enchant Wondrous Item, *mass charm*
Market Price: 9,216 gp
Weight: 1 pound

The shack is packed with clutter and illuminated by a small lantern hung from the rafters and sunlight filtering through the cloth coverings. Nailed to the walls are two buckets to catch rainwater from the leaky roof. The floor has wide gaps in the boards and in some places has rotted through. A table littered with food scraps leans over one such hole.

Behind the door is a small bookcase. A cupboard, two barrels, filthy sleeping pallets, and a cauldron are packed against the walls. A small anvil has been affixed to the apron of a great fieldstone fireplace. Three shipping crates support a plank table covered with freshly pounded nails, a forge hammer, rivets, and a bellows.

The windows are trapped to discourage PCs from climbing through; see the **Trap** section below.

If the guards protecting the shack are overwhelmed or turned against him, Plygar abandons the shack as described in **Tactics** below, taking with him the **Treasure** carried on his person. If he is forced to confront the PCs, read or paraphrase the following:

Before you stands a small, hunched man with a missing left eye. He wears oversized boots and a filthy, soot-covered robe. A length of frayed rope binds his waist. Around his neck hangs an iron amulet shaped like a black sun crossed with a brass lightning bolt and wreathed in gold. The man smells vaguely of mint.

"You thought you could save that pathetic town?" he says in a raspy voice. "For years those people have tormented me, and I won't allow you to spoil my revenge! When I release the dam, their crops will be destroyed, and they will enjoy a winter of starvation! I will laugh at their pathetic cries! This is my hour of glory, and I won't let you ruin it!"

The cupboard contains a week of trail rations for fourteen people, and the barrels hold rainwater. The three crates hold the merchant caravan's supply of wine (36 bottles worth 10 gp apiece). If her charm is broken, Janne claims possession of the wine crates, each of which clearly bears the mark of the Clover Trading Company.

The bookshelf near the door holds two tomes. The first book describes the rise and fall of Radeem, as told from the perspective of a former apprentice. Among Radeem's greater accomplishments were the following:

☛ Radeem summoned an air elemental that devastated the Rotting Claw gnoll tribe that lived in the distant hills.

☛ The wizard incinerated a tribe of lizard folk using a *wand of fireball.* No vestige of the reptile tribe remains to this day.

☛ Radeem called upon a great flood to drive a band of goblin raiders from their cavernous lair (which is reportedly near the wizard's stronghold). This deed awed a nearby clan of wild gnomes, who agreed to help the wizard excavate the dungeons beneath his stronghold.

☛ The wizard enslaved a tribe of ogres (the Bonebreaker Clan) with the help of an *earthquake* spell cast from a scroll. Radeem later used the compliant ogres to raise his mighty stronghold.

The second book is a chronicle of Plygar's activities since leaving Cherry Knoll, scrawled in Plygar's poor handwriting. Plygar keeps the latter book so that others can benefit from his genius and his musings. Most of the margins are filled with unintelligible rants and curses, mostly directed toward the people of Cherry Knoll. Neither book is valuable.

Creature (EL 2): Plygar is a reprehensible and devious villain. At the first opportunity, he uses the *mass charm* power of the Symbol of the False Prophet to force the PCs into subservience. Suspecting that the item has only a few charges remaining, he tries to affect as many PCs as possible at once. He orders charmed PCs to surrender the bejeweled eye (if Plygar suspects they have it) and guard the shack while he and any surviving caravan guards open the floodgates in area **N**. If she is alive, Janne is left behind to guard the shack.

Plygar, Human Male Com3: CR 2; Medium Humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 3d4+3 (includes Toughness feat); hp 12; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (15 ft. in swamp); AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, dagger); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +4 (includes Iron Will feat); Str 10, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +2, Craft (engineering) +6, Listen +7 (includes Alertness feat), Rope Use +3, Spot +5 (includes Alertness feat), Swim +2. *Feats:* Alertness, Iron Will, Toughness.

Possessions: Dagger, waterproof sack. See **Treasure** below for other items and equipment.

Tactics: If the security of the shack is compromised, Plygar throws all of his precious belongings in a waterproof sack, climbs down through one of the holes in the floor, and swims to area **Q**, using the ruins of Radeem's stronghold as cover and as a resting point. Before entering the water, he spends 1 round rubbing himself with horsemint oil, which the giant

catfish find unappetizing. PCs who swim after Plygar without such protection are attacked by a giant catfish as they swim toward the ruined stronghold (area **S1**).

Assuming he makes a successful Swim skill check (DC 10), it takes Plygar 10 rounds to reach area **Q**. There he tips over the gargoyle statue and removes the *potions of cure moderate wounds*. Then he heads toward the floodgates to cut the ropes and trigger the flood. (See area **N** for details.) If he suspects that the PCs are following him, he drinks his *potion of nondetection*.

Trap (EL 1/4): Embedded in the open window frames of the shack are jagged shards of glass and sharpened nails. Any PC attempting to crawl into the shack through a window without the aid of thick gloves, gauntlets, or similar protection takes 1d4 points of damage.

Treasure: Plygar's possessions include the Symbol of the False Prophet (see sidebar), a nonmagical dagger, and a waterproofed sack containing a lantern, candle, tinderbox, 50 gp, a *potion of nondetection*, a *potion of tongues*, and an ornate iron key shaped like a black skeleton. Plygar found the key near the ruins of Radeem's stronghold but does not know what it opens. (See area **S1** for details.)

Plygar also keeps two applications of horsemint oil in pouches fastened to his rope belt. When applied to bare flesh, the oil wards off the giant catfish that prowl the swamp; each application is good for 8 hours.

Concluding the Adventure

PCs who figure out how the floodgates work can drain the swamp slowly (it takes a week) and use Plygar's notes to explore the ruins of Radeem's stronghold. If the PCs ransack Plygar's hovel and he escapes, he almost certainly plots revenge against them. Properly played, Plygar is a resourceful and cunning villain. He never confronts the PCs directly but uses the Symbol of the False Prophet (or some clever ploy) to lure others into performing his "dirty work."

If the PCs hand Plygar over to the halflings, they are rewarded (the nature of the reward determined by the DM) and earn the respect of the village. PCs can also return Janne to her father after the effects of the charm wear off. Her father, the wealthy owner of a successful merchant house, is quite concerned about the whereabouts of his headstrong daughter and offers various employment opportunities to her rescuers. If the PCs are not interested in working for the merchant, Janne's father offers them some other nonmonetary reward (a small plot of land, a bankrupt inn he cheerfully refers to as a "fixer-upper," or whatever the DM desires).

If the PCs thwart Plygar's scheme to flood Cherry Knoll, the townfolk will not believe the PCs' story until the town cleric (who can recognize Plygar's handwriting) reads Plygar's journal and learns what he had been planning. The cleric can also verify the authenticity of the Symbol of the False Prophet. PCs are then treated as heroes; a celebration ensues, the PCs are given free room and board at the local inn for a week, and an entry is made in the town ledgers, detailing their brave exploits. The PCs are inundated with requests to tell and retell their tale in the common room of the inn.

Opportunities for further adventures abound. If the PCs discover the tapestry maps in area **S4** of Radeem's stronghold, they might uncover any number of adventure locations in the vicinity of Cherry Knoll or unidentified sites on the fringes of the civilized realm. The PCs might also return to Radeem's stronghold to excavate the buried tunnels (area **S10**) and see where they lead. Radeem conducted raids throughout the land and hoarded tremendous wealth; secret treasures might lie deep beneath the swamp in chambers as yet undiscovered!

Patrick has been an avid Dungeon Master since 1980. He has spent the past twelve years in the United States Air Force. Upon retirement, he aspires to reach middle income so that he can be considered eccentric rather than just odd.

Encounter Level Chart on Next Page

Encounter Level Chart

Any encounter involving creatures or traps has an Encounter Level (EL), An EL value gives the DM an idea of how challenging the encounter is. If the encounter involves one creature or trap, the EL is the same as the creature's or trap's Challenge Rating (CR). For encounters with multiple creatures and/or traps, the EL can be much higher.

If the EL is lower than the party level, the encounter is relatively easy. If the EL is equal to the party level, the encounter is moderately challenging. If the EL is higher than the party level, the encounter is tough and potentially deadly to the PCs if they are unwise or unlucky.

Summarized below are the ELs for all of the encounters in this adventure:

Area	Encounter Description	EL
A	Ontho, Human War2	3
	Laisis, Human War2	
B	Rixin Stoutblood, Halfling War1	3
	10 Halfling Com1	
	11 Ponies	
F	Thornfur the White Wolf	1
G	8 Wolves	6
	4 Wolf Pups	
H	Choke Creeper	4 or 6
I	8 Giant Worker Ants	8
	4 Giant Soldier Ants	
	1 Giant Ant Queen	
J	8 Monstrous Spiders	6
K	Bat Swarm	2
L	3 Shriekers	3
M	2 Giant Catfish	4 and 4
N	Fredrick, Human War2	3
	Porlow, Human War1	
O	6 Monstrous Frogs	5
P	4 Giant Bees	5
S2	Poison Gas Trap	3
S4	4 Human Zombies	3
	1 Ogre Zombies	
S6	Thurra, Half-fiend Rog3/Sor2	7
S7	Slippery Stairs	1/4
S8	8 Human Skeletons	3
	Collapsing Balcony	1/4
S9	7 Monstrous Centipedes	3
S11	2 Very Young Black Dragons	6
T	Janne Clover, Human Exp2	6
	Khelsor Stormdancer, Human Ftr3	
	8 Guards, Human War1	
	Plygar, Human Com3	2
	Window Trap	1/4
*	1 Trapdoor Spider	1
*	2 Giant Worker Ants	2
*	Orem the Centaur	3
*	1 Cockatrice	3
**	Mosquito Cloud	1
**	4 Giant Leeches	2
**	6 Stirges	3

* These are random forest encounters.
** These are random swamp encounters.

Letters (continued from page 8)

Looking for Freelancers?

I'm excited about the new D&D game and especially pleased to see the class restrictions lifted. (Gnome paladins and dwarf wizards? What has the world come to?) Kudos on your most recent issue (Issue #81). I liked the way James Wyatt scaled his adventure, "The Door To Darkness," for different character levels. This little feature makes the adventure even more playable. The poster map of the inn was also very useful.

I'm glad to see more higher-level adventures in the magazine and look forward to seeing more! I don't use the psionics rules, but I thought "Divisions of the Mind" was an outstanding adventure that could be easily adapted to nonpsionic campaigns. The ulitharid Shannotsuul is one of the most unusual "female" characters I've seen in some time. I love modules in which the heroes have a chance to roleplay with the bad guys, not just attack them on sight.

In future issues, I'd like to see more adventures that feature interesting locations like the crystal citadel in "Divisions of the Mind" and the subterranean cavern in "Khazefryn." One of the most difficult things for me is creating an interesting location, and mapmaking has never been one of my strengths. Even when I don't use an adventure, I often use the maps. Thanks for the Maps of Mystery; keep them coming!

> I LOVE MODULES IN WHICH THE PCS HAVE A CHANCE TO ROLEPLAY WITH THE BAD GUYS, NOT JUST ATTACK THEM ON SIGHT.

I have a couple questions, specifically: How do you decide what adventures will appear in each issue, and how long does it take for an adventure to see print once it's been accepted for publication? Do all of your adventures come from outside freelancers? Thanks for listening (and responding)!

Michelle Nitzer
Toronto, ON

Every adventure published in Dungeon Magazine *will include a "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar, enabling DMs to modify it for PCs of different levels. When the occasion warrants, we will also include "Adapting the Adventure" sidebars to help DMs adapt generic adventures to world-specific campaign settings (including out-of-print favorites).*

We plan each issue based on the submissions we receive. We try to offer a balance of high-, mid-, and low-level adventures, as well as a variety of locations and plots. The time it takes for an adventure to see print varies widely. The longest wait is about 2 years; most of the time, we publish an adventure within 6-9 months of acceptance.

Until more people become familiar with the new rules, we've asked several in-house designers to contribute to the magazine. This issue includes adventures written by staffers Ed Stark and Jeff Grubb. Future issues will include adventures from Monte Cook, Rich Baker, and others; however, the majority of our content still comes from freelance writers, and we'll try to feature at least one new author in every issue. Ω

NOTTINGHAM CASTLE

Illustration by Stephen Daniele

CASTLE TERMS

ALLURE: A passage or gallery behind a parapet at the top of a wall of a fortification. Also known as a bailey walk, parapet walk, wall walk, and wall walkway.

BARBICAN: A fortified opening in a castle wall. Various parts of the barbican made it a difficult place for invaders to break through. A porticullis and fortified doors often blocked passage, while murder holes allowed defenders to pour hot oil or arrows on attackers inside the gatehouse.

BASTION: A protruding tower in the curtain wall.

BATTLEMENTS: The low wall on the outer side of an allure that was often topped with crenellations.

CRENELLATIONS: The pattern at the top of the wall or battlement allowing archers to shoot while also providing some degree of protection. The raised portions are called merlons, while the open sections are called crenels.

CURTAIN WALL: An interior wall separating the different wards.

MOAT: A ditch surrounding the outer wall meant to slow down attackers. Most moats were dry, steep, and very challenging to cross. Some castles had several moats, walls, and gate-houses between wards.

ORIEL: A protruding bay window in an upper story, supported from below by corbels, or brackets, of stone or wood. They were often placed over gateways or entrances.

POSTERN: A small secondary entrance, sometimes concealed, and usually at the rear of a castle. Used for sorties and as a route of escape.

TALUS: The sloping face at the base of a castle wall. The talus made it more difficult to undermine or batter down the wall and caused scaling ladders to be less effective. If ladders were placed on the ground before the talus, they would either be too short or inclined at an angle that could cause them to sag and break.

WARD: The inner yard containing workshops, stables, livestock, gardens, and so on. Often they were constructed concentrically, thus forming an outer ward and inner ward.

Maid Marian's Tower
Keep
Postern
Chapel
Archery Range
Bastion
INNER WARD
Curtain Wall
Garrison
Oriel
Inner Gate
Moat
Allure
Battlements
OUTER WARD
Stable
Castle Farm
Murder Holes
Barbican
Talus

Maid Marian's Tower

Dungeon

Garrison

Barbican

ROBIN HOOD COUNTRY

Illustrated by Stephen Daniele

TO YORK

N

Melbourne
Market Weighton
Leconfield
Beverley
R. Hull
Cottingham
Withernsea
Kingston
Selby
R. Ouse
R. Aire
R. Ouse
R. Humber
R. Don
Winterton
Kilnsea
Elsham
Scunthorpe
Spurn Head
Grimsby
Humberston
Caistor
R. Ancholme
R. Trent
R. Idle
Gainsborough
Louth
LINCOLNSHIRE
Scampton
Market Rasen
Rampton
Lincoln
Bardney
Bardney Abbey
Tattershall
Leadenham
Leasingham
R. Witham
Grantham
10 MILES
5 MILES

Kirkstall Abbey
Leeds
R. Cock
Bradford
Blackburn
Kirklees Priory
Wakefield
Huddersfield
Castle Hill
Rochdale
YORKSHIRE
Barnsley
Barnsdale Forest
Doncaster
Bosgart Hole
Howden Moor
Manchester
Ecclesfield
Rotherham
Bailey Hill
Loxley
Cockcrowing Stone
Sheffield
Edale
R. Noe
Hathersage
R. Derwent
Whitworth Wood
Worksop
Sherwood Forest
Tuxford
Mansfield
Major Oak
Edwinstowe
Rufford Abbey
Fountaindale
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Newstead Abbey
Dover Beck
R. Trent
Newton
Nottingham
R. Leen
Duffield
R. Derwent
Derby
Ashbourne
Arbor Low
Grey Ladies
Bakewell
Lees moor Wood
Stanton Moor
Nine Ladies
Chesterfield
R. Wye
CHESHIRE
DERBYSHIRE
STAFFORDSHIRE
R. Weaver
Congleton
Bridestone's Tomb

Scotland
Ireland
Wales
England
Area of detail